

CONSIDERING GONZALES V. CARHART: ITS IMPORTANCE, THE FUTURE

by The Rev. Frank Pavone and
The Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth

April 18, 2007 is a day of historic importance for the pro-life movement and for all of American society. On that day the United States Supreme Court, in Gonzales v. Carhart, upheld the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. This Supreme Court decision is of crucial importance for seven reasons; and it also lays the groundwork, in three ways, for future pro-life progress.

WHY GONZALES IS IMPORTANT

1. Gonzales, for the first time since Roe v. Wade in 1973, upholds a law which actually bans, rather than merely regulates, a particular abortion procedure. (Though it could be said that the Born-Alive Infants' Protection Act of 2002 bans "live-birth" abortion — that is, delivering a child and then setting aside the newborn to die.)
2. Gonzales allows a legislative ban of partial-birth abortion, even though it lacks an unlimited health-of-the-mother exception, to stand. Recall that, according to the United States Supreme Court's Doe v. Bolton decision (1973), "health" has a very broad meaning in American abortion law: it includes "all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age—relevant to the well-being of the patient." Inclusion of an unlimited health exception would have practically nullified the legislated ban.
3. Gonzales emphasizes that the state has a legitimate interest in the life of the unborn child throughout pregnancy. Indeed, the decision refers to the state's right to "express profound respect for the life of the unborn" and affirms "that the government has a legitimate, substantial interest in preserving and promoting fetal life."
4. Gonzales asserts the state's "legitimate interest in regulating the medical profession in order to promote respect for life, including the life of the unborn." Therefore, the Court reminds American medicine to focus on sustaining, not taking, human life.

5. Gonzales reinforces the significance of informed consent. Writing for the majority, Justice Kennedy declares: "The state has an interest in ensuring so grave a choice is well informed. It is self-evident that a mother who comes to regret her choice to abort must struggle with grief more anguished and sorrow more profound when she learns, only after the event, what she once did not know: that she allowed a doctor to pierce the skull and vacuum the fast-developing brain of her unborn child, a child assuming the human form."

6. Gonzales reminds us that elections matter. The elections of 2000, 2002, and 2004 made this U.S. Supreme Court decision possible. They elected many of the legislators who passed the 2003 Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, and the President who nominated, and the Senate which confirmed, two new Supreme Court Justices.

7. Gonzales adopts a new legal language with which to discuss abortion. It oftentimes speaks of: "child" (not "fetus"), "mother" (not "woman"), and "abortion doctor" (not "physician").

GONZALES LAYS GROUNDWORK FOR THE FUTURE

1. Gonzales shows a new respect for the legislative branch of government and its moral discernment in responding to the challenge posed by abortion. This Court is less willing to tolerate a privileged status for the "right to abortion." This opens the door to more aggressive regulation of abortion by state and federal legislatures.
2. Gonzales, by narrowing the unlimited health exception of Doe v. Bolton (see #2 above) to focus on "significant health risks," encourages pro-life legislation based on abortion's negative impact on women.
3. Gonzales demonstrates that the Court will be less likely to create a new "right to human cloning" or a new "right to destructive embryo research." Such legislative decisions, in light of this decision, will most likely be left to the states.

In conclusion, Gonzales v. Carhart stops the momentum of the abortion movement, calls American society to reconsider the matter of abortion with a new urgency and intensity, and motivates all

witnesses for life in all the churches to rededicate ourselves to works of mercy, education, and justice that will defend and advance the dignity of the unborn child and mother.

Rev. Pavone is the national director of Priests for Life and the president of the National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC), and Rev. Stallsworth is the editor of Lifewatch. An earlier version of this article appeared in the Spring 2007 issue of the Uniting for Life, which is published by the NPRC.♥

RCRC AND UMC RESPOND TO GONZALES V. CARHART

Remember this description of partial-birth abortion: “Sometimes called D and X, for dilation and extraction, it [partial-birth abortion] entails partly extracting an intact fetus from a woman’s uterus and killing it by collapsing and removing the brain from the skull so that the fetus can pass through the birth canal.” (Julia Preston, “Appeals Court Voids Ban on ‘Partial-Birth’ Abortions,” New York Times, July 9, 2005)

Remember that the Board of Directors of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC)—to which United Methodism’s General Board of Church and Society and Women’s Division/General Board of Global Ministries belong—“issued a statement denouncing this new ban [that is, the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003] as part of an organized effort to deny women full and effective reproductive health care.” (“Background Document: The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice,” p. 3, Marjorie Signer [RCRC contact]) Again, in a statement, RCRC denounced the 2003 ban of partial-birth abortion—not the grisly reality of partial-birth abortion.

Remember that RCRC “filed an amici curiae brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in Gonzales v. Carhart, challenging the ban on religious grounds and urging the Court to strike it down.” (www.rcrc.org/news/Supreme%20Court%20Decision.cfm)

Remember that The United Methodist Church, in its Social Principles, boldly declares: “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.” (Paragraph 161J, The Book of Discipline [2004], emphasis added)

So, with these facts in mind, one might ask: how did the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and The United Methodist Church respond to the U. S. Supreme Court’s Gonzales v. Carhart decision?

Soon after the Gonzales decision was made public, RCRC released an article entitled: “Supreme Court Decision a Devastating Setback for Women’s

Health and Freedom of Conscience.” A brief sentence in the article says it all: “Today’s decision is alarming.” In the same article, Dr. Leroy H. Carhart, RCRC Board Member and the lead plaintiff in Gonzales, notes: “I am devastated by today’s decision.” Furthermore, Rev. Carlton W. Veazey, RCRC’s President and CEO, states: “This decision moves us closer to the time when sectarian religious viewpoints will govern medical decisions for all Americans, whether they share those viewpoints or not.” (www.rcrc.org/news/Supreme%20Court%20Decision.cfm) Obviously, RCRC is deeply disturbed by the Gonzales decision.

At United Methodism’s General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), Ms. Linda Bales responded to Gonzales v. Carhart by writing an article with the title “Understanding the U.S. Supreme Court Decision on Abortion Procedure” (April 23, 2007). In this article, Ms. Bales reviews some facts and controversies surrounding the decision, many of which seem skeptical or critical of Gonzales. At the end of her article, after quoting the sentence on partial-birth abortion from the Social Principles (Paragraph 161J, The Book of Discipline [2004]), she finally admits: “This decision of the Court is consistent with our Social Principles except that there is no provision made by this decision for cases where the fetus has severe anomalies.” This seems to be a neutral concession, lacking approval and disapproval, that Gonzales, for the most part, is consistent with the United Methodist position on partial-birth abortion.

Therefore, responding to Gonzales v. Carhart, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice expresses maximum disagreement with the Court’s decision, while United Methodism’s General Board of Church and Society is clinically neutral toward the same decision. One wonders why Church and Society is not more approving of, and grateful for, the Gonzales decision; after all, as Ms. Bales notes, this decision “is consistent with our Social Principles,” for the most part. (Paul T. Stallsworth) ♥

ANNUAL CONFERENCES ON ABORTION

The 2007 round of Annual Conferences has ended, and the results of legislation pertaining to abortion are in. And there is good news.

The Mississippi Conference and the North Carolina Conference passed legislation that called The United Methodist Church’s 2008 General Conference to amend its basic teaching on abortion—that is, to support legal abortion only in the event the mother’s life being endangered. If that is accomplished, our United Methodist moral teaching on abortion could no longer be understood as consistent with Roe v. Wade’s pro-choice, legal position on abortion.

In addition, the Holston Conference, the Mississippi Conference, the North Carolina

Conference, the Northwest Texas Conference, and the South Indiana Conference passed resolutions that called on The United Methodist Church to withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). (For a fuller account of these legislative advances, see John Lomperis' "United Methodist Church Challenged to End Support for Abortion," July 4, 2007, www.lifewatch.com/printpage.php.) As the above [Lifewatch](#) article indicates, there are very strong reasons for United Methodism to withdraw from RCRC.

Again, these legislative achievements, in the several Annual Conferences, are good news. However, we must never tire of telling the truth about life, abortion, and RCRC—for the 2008 General Conference is less than one year away. (Paul T. Stallsworth) ♥

AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

Many [Lifewatch](#) readers and supporters are familiar with the good work done by Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) and Pregnancy Resource Centers (PRCs) to help women during and after unintended pregnancies. You may not know that two such organizations—Care Net and Heartbeat International, Inc.—hold large, annual conferences where CPC/PRC staff and volunteers learn ways to improve their ministries to all who enter their centers.

The 36th Annual Heartbeat International Conference was held in St. Louis in April. Located near my hometown and offering (for the first time, methinks) a track of workshops focused on issues and needs of post-abortive individuals, this conference was an opportunity I could not pass by!

Each day began with worship services—mass or praise-and-worship, depending on one's church affiliation. A keynote speaker followed. Among the speakers were Rev. John Ensor, Rev. Johnny Hunter, Walter Larimore, M.D., and Julie Parton, Ph.D. They spoke from the heart about thought-provoking subjects and provided powerful words of encouragement.

Beyond the worship services and keynote speakers, the vast majority of my time was spent in workshops. Ten tracks of workshops covered topics important to the pro-life community. Some tracks, such as "Client Services" and "Board," would not be useful to Lifewatch members or supporters. Other tracks—such as the "Medical" and "Housing" tracks, and the "Post-Abortion" track, which drew me to the conference in the first place—were highly relevant to pro-life United Methodists. Eighty-five different workshops, each lasting 1-1/4 hours, were offered

during the event. Sometimes it was difficult to choose which one, in a given time period, to attend!

I attended seven of the nine post-abortion workshops offered. As I listened, it became clear that abortion impacts many people beyond the pregnant woman and the child she aborts. Stacy Massey, President and Founding Partner of the Abortion Recovery International Network (ARIN), introduced the concept of post-abortion trauma. Dr. Theresa Burke, Ph.D. explained how any emotional trauma impacts the brain and the similarity of post-abortion stress to post-traumatic stress disorder, known to

many from the Viet Nam War era. Mary Comm, founder of In Our Midst Ministries and author of [Secret Sin: When God's People Choose Abortion](#), explained why churches should be involved in post-abortion ministry and suggested ways to

*Crisis Pregnancy Workshops now available to Lifewatch friends:
Sept. 20-22, 2007, Louisville, KY
April 16-19, 2008, Dallas, TX*

begin those ministries. Leaders of other workshops gave their abortion testimonies as part of their presentations. Listening to all seven speakers, I was reminded that the decision to abort not only impacts the woman and child but also may impact the boyfriend, future husband and families, grandparents, siblings, friends, and even employers. One abortion, multiplied millions of times, has a major influence on the health and well-being of our culture.

The remaining workshop—"How to Use the Media to Turn Words into Actions"—proved to be invaluable as well. The presenter, a former ABC news reporter and producer, taught us: what to expect from print, radio, and television journalists; and how to prepare a 20-second explanation of our mission and goals. She indicated that a brief explanation is most effective when it instantly grabs the attention and emotions of the audience, and when it motivates the reporter to ask additional questions. I have not yet had an opportunity to use this information; but knowing what to expect from, and how to respond to, reporters is essential for any pro-life ministry.

By the end of the three-day conference, I was filled to overflowing with new information, new friendships, and new enthusiasm for spreading the truth about abortion, about its after-effects, and about the message of life. During a conversation with one of the conference organizers, I expressed frustration that this event was fantastic, yet not open to Lifewatch supporters, because we are not PRC employees or volunteers. In response, she invited the friends of Lifewatch to attend future conferences and take what we learn back to our homes and congregations.

So, what can you do? If you are able, attend one of these conferences. The 24th Annual Care Net Conference will take place September 20-22, 2007 in Louisville, KY; and the 37th Annual Heartbeat

International Conference will be held April 16-19, 2008 in Dallas, TX (just days before the opening of the 2008 General Conference). When registering, you should list “Lifewatch” as your organization. You will gain knowledge and confidence, and you will be better prepared to stand up for life within your Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Be prepared, in defense of life. (Cindy Evans) ♥

AN ANATOMY OF A PROJECT

A version of the following speech was delivered by Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth—on June 15, 2007 at Covenant United Methodist Church in Winterville, NC—to the Evangelical Fellowship of the North Carolina Conference.

This afternoon it is my pleasure and privilege to have this opportunity to address you, the Evangelical Fellowship of the North Carolina Conference and guests. Reverend Don Shields, thank you for the invitation to speak; but surely you could have found a better speaker!

Don, my notes indicate that you requested that this speech provide some

background information on the project entitled “Doctrine, Dissent, and Defense: A Conversation on The United Methodist Church and Homosexuality” (which appeared in Lifewatch [December 1, 2005 and June 1, 2007] as Special Reports). You also asked that a briefer speech would allow some time for comments, questions, and responses before all of us head back to the salt mines of Annual Conference.

With no disrespect intended, I will venture a guess that this is not an ideal time to deliver a speech. We are: three days into Annual Conference; sleep deprived; digesting a delicious, abundant lunch; and fighting off a siesta. Furthermore, by this time in Annual Conference, some of us are tired of talking about ecclesiastical stuff and ready to return to our families, parish routines, and sports pages. This had better be a good attempt, if not a good speech. Here goes.

THE DUKE LACROSSE CASE

First of all, consider what the “Duke lacrosse scandal,” now the “Duke lacrosse case,” suggests about how American society, in 2007, usually conducts its public moral discussion of an issue. As we all remember, that infamous lacrosse team party occurred on March 13, 2006 at 610 North Buchanan Boulevard in Durham. Soon after the accusations of

sexual assault were made and the criminal charges filed, the Durham District Attorney Michael Nifong went on a verbal rampage against the lacrosse team. Left-of-center critics, inside and outside the university, provided the sociological context for the assumed crime; their often repeated mantra had four parts: “racism, sexism, classism, and media bias.” Duke Divinity School visiting professor Dr. Timothy B. Tyson’s “Ugly Past Echoes in Duke Case” (News & Observer, 04/08/07) added historical background to the left’s mantra. Day after day for months, the News & Observer, the New York Times, and the evening cable news programs hammered home the left’s message. Meanwhile, many right-of-center critics took to the blogosphere and stated their perspectives in sometimes nasty ways. Duke Divinity School offered opportunities for public prayer. Parents of the players paid dearly for legal assistance. Duke

University established several commissions for the study of various aspects of university life. And every once in a while, Reverend Dr. Sam Wells, the Dean of Duke Chapel, and Dr. Richard H. Brodhead, the President of Duke University, offered thoughtful commentary. However, throughout this crisis, as has recently

“[A]fter each recent General Conference, to an unfortunate extent, the teaching on homosexuality just sits there—in black ink on white pages between hardback covers of a maroon-colored book. It seems that The United Methodist Church has no official teachers to lift the words off the pages and make the teaching authoritative in the church.”

been noted, Duke lacked a spokesman for the university to hold up the best of its university traditions and to offer moral commentary on the case as it developed.

The bottom line: Through intimidation, left-of-center critics silenced many who otherwise would have joined the moral discourse on this case. This situation—in which moral discourse was dominated by left-of-center contributions—was called “pluralism,” though it seemed more one-sided than pluralistic. (And by the way, true pluralism, which is a societal good, involves various parties locked in civil argument about the truths that have a claim on all of us.) And as happens so often, the Duke lacrosse case was finally resolved by the processes and decisions of the judicial sphere.

UNITED METHODISM’S TEACHING OFFICE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Now, shift gears. Consider how The United Methodist Church is handling the moral-theological discussion, in its own household, on homosexual practice.

Every four years General Conference meets to do many things. Perhaps most importantly, General Conference interprets the Bible for United Methodism. Practically speaking, General Conference establishes church doctrine and discipline—and edits

The Book of Discipline—for the next four years.

In its most recent sessions, General Conference has become a “church struggle” over denominational doctrine and discipline related to homosexual practice. Each recent quadrennial conference has tweaked church doctrine and discipline on the matter of homosexuality.

But after each recent General Conference, to an unfortunate extent, the teaching on homosexuality just sits there—in black ink on white pages between hardback covers of a maroon-colored book. It seems that The United Methodist Church has no official teachers to lift the words off the pages and make the teaching authoritative in the church.

The Council of Bishops and the active individual bishops, to a great extent, have chosen to remain silent on the subject of homosexuality. It appears that fear silences the Council and the bishops. There is the fear of exposing division within the Council and among the bishops. There is the fear of doing damage to, even dividing, the denomination. There is the fear of bringing down the wrath of the homosexual-practice revisionists. So for the most part, the Council and the bishops choose to remain silent. In fact, they turn over conflict on homosexual practice to the Judicial Council. All the while, the “pluralism” found in The United Methodist Church is celebrated.

Do we see how United Methodism so nicely reflects the general society’s moral deliberations—or lack thereof? Contemporary American society and current United Methodism set the context for the project before us.

THE PROMISED ANATOMY

At last, we turn to the anatomy of the project entitled “Doctrine, Dissent, and Defense: A Conversation on The United Methodist Church and Homosexuality.”

The Unity Dialogue on homosexuality was established by Bishop Marion M. Edwards in 1998. The Unity Dialogue was formed to move debate on homosexuality from the floor of Annual Conference to a non-legislative setting. To a great extent, The Unity Dialogue has fostered thoughtful moral and theological discussion.

Several years ago Dr. David C. Steinmetz, a professor of Church history at Duke Divinity School, led The Unity Dialogue through a seminar entitled “Dissent and the Church.” Dr. Steinmetz clarified our thinking about pluralism in the Church. He indicated that all moral and theological claims in the Church are not equal, that the Church has teaching, and that opinions that oppose basic Church doctrine can be

called “dissent.” Dr. Steinmetz’s presentation implied that there is a standard rhythm in most theological arguments in the Church: doctrine, dissent, and defense.

Later, in a meeting of renewal leaders in our denomination, I suggested initiating a quarterly publication by the name Doctrine and Dissent. (After all, in United Methodism today, there is not a publication in which theological arguments can develop.) In my last Generous Orthodoxy column for the North Carolina Christian Advocate, I made the same suggestion. Because the former Advocate was abruptly put to rest, this last column was not published.

A couple of years ago, I requested that the New Bern District Council on Ministries fund the publication of a booklet of moral-theological conversation; it would include essays on doctrine, dissent, and defense. A generous \$500 grant was approved.

Because the most controverted issue in the Church was then, and now

is, homosexuality, I updated a 1999 essay, entitled “Salvation and Sexuality: What The United Methodist Church Teaches,” to be the essay on doctrine.

Since Reverend Laurie Hays Coffman is the co-chair of The Unity Dialogue, and since she is a trusted sister in Christ, I asked her to write the essay on dissent for the booklet. Though Laurie broke many deadlines, and though she handed me an essay at the 2006 Annual Conference that proved to be much too long, I tried to be patient. Asked to rewrite and shorten her article, Laurie, too, persisted. In a reasonable time, she submitted a shorter, tighter essay.

Then it was my turn to write a defense of our church’s doctrine. The many drafts took much longer, and brought on more restless nights, than I had hoped. With input from a couple of friends, I was able to complete the task. I sent the defense essay to Laurie for her approval, which she granted.

At long last, the three essays—on doctrine, dissent, and defense—were gathered and prepared for publication. High-school intern Heather Lewis-McKeel and church secretary Carole Stalnaker played strong roles in getting the booklet published. Using the \$500 grant, we had two batches of the booklet printed.

A copy of the booklet was then given to the New Bern District Superintendent, Reverend Doug Jessee, and sent to selected friends throughout the North Carolina Conference. Rev. Jessee requested that copies of the booklet be given to the pastors across the New Bern District and discussed in their Covenant Groups. Later, Rev. Coffman and I decided to put the booklet in front of The Unity Dialogue for discussion.

“Do we see how United Methodism so nicely reflects the general society’s moral deliberations—or lack thereof? Contemporary American society and current United Methodism set the context for the project before us.”

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND

THE ANNUAL LIFEWATCH SERVICE OF WORSHIP (9:30 a.m.)

Preaching

Bp. William H. Willimon

Birmingham Area of The United Methodist Church

THE ANNUAL LIFEWATCH BOARD MEETING (3:00 p.m.)

Both on January 22, 2008 (Tuesday)

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

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On the day of that discussion, Reverend Charles Michael Smith suggested that the contents of the booklet be included in the 2007 Annual Conference Book of Handouts. Rev. Smith's suggestion took this pastor by surprise; after all, Annual Conference, as we know it, is not supposed to be about moral-theological substance. Finally, the project's dissent and defense essays were published in Lifewatch (June 1, 2007), a newsletter which goes out to around 5,000 United Methodists across the United States.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Allow me a few concluding comments. We are tempted to see The United Methodist Church's debate about homosexuality as a left-versus-right matter. However, I believe it is better to understand this argument as a matter in which the church teaches, then invites dissent, and finally defends its doctrine over against the dissent.

Recently the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams noted that there are now three parties vying throughout the Church: liberals, catholics, and evangelicals. Liberals are fueled by prophetic zeal and elite cultural commitments. Catholics are committed to the Church, the Church's Tradition, and the Church's unity. Evangelicals are decisively Biblical. In The United Methodist Church today, catholics and evangelicals are uniting to meet the doctrinal challenge of liberalism's dissent on homosexuality.

In "The Mission of the Redeemer," John Paul II wrote: "The Church imposes nothing, she only proposes." Yes, the Church proposes the truth in love, again and again and again. Many outside the Church will reject the Church's proposal. Even segments within the Church will reject the Church's authoritative word. Still, the Church engages and answers the rejection, and defends the proposed faith.

The ideal development in United Methodism, with regard to the matter of homosexuality, would be for the Council of Bishops and the bishops themselves to propose the truth of the Church's faith. The importance of episcopal teaching came home to me during a Board of Ordained Ministry interview last winter. Interviewing a candidate in the Theology

and Doctrine Committee, I was struck by a certain pity for a young, inexperienced, insecure pastor who would lack episcopal backing for his teaching of doctrine. The Council and the bishops must propose the Church's faith and challenge the larger denomination to live according to that faith. Until the bishops do that, our denomination will move into the future in fits and starts.

LETTERS TO LIFEWATCH

May 27, 2007

Dear Paul,

I continue to appreciate your labors on behalf of Lifewatch. The inclusion of the Coffman statement in the last issue [June 1, 2007] was helpful in grasping both the strengths and weaknesses of the pro-homosexual position. But more needs to be said about her inability to distinguish between person and act, sinner and sin (same-sex intercourse)...

Thanks for your good work. Keep it up. Peace,
—Philip M. Dripps/61 Southgate Course/St. Charles, IL

May 27, 2007

Paul,

Thank you for the discussion engendered by Lifewatch. I found Laurie's "Response" and your "Concluding Word" interesting and carefully crafted. I think that Laurie made a point at the top of p. 4 [Special Report, June 1, 2007] that you did not respond to, but which I feel holds much promise in helping people of God work through this issue.

She states: "Committing oneself to love another human being of the same gender is not a sin. Indeed, as with cross-gender love, it may fulfill a divine calling." This is a point on which all sides can agree. Human experience of same-gender relationships is an important part of the history of human relationships. And yet this history is being almost totally ignored in current discussion. The obsession with all the possibilities of same-sex relationships totally consumes the conversation.

I respectfully beg for careful study and reflection on human experience of same-gender relationships.

Keep up the good work of inviting conversation.
—The Reverend Rufus H. Stark II/364 Shewbird Lane/
Hayesville, NC 28904

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

• Your personal contributions to the ministry of Lifewatch are absolutely essential. General Conference 2008 poses many challenges to which Lifewatch will respond. Only with your help can Lifewatch accomplish what we are called to do—that is, witness to the Gospel of Life within The United Methodist Church and beyond. Please 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. Our heartfelt thanks to you for your generous response.

● On July 13-15, Lifewatch hosted a display table at the North Central/South Central Regional Gathering of United Methodist Men in St. Louis, MO. Throughout the gathering, Lifewatch's Cindy Evans engaged in numerous conversations, distributed Lifewatch literature, and generally witnessed to the Gospel of Life to many United Methodists. Just for your information.

● Dr. Hadley Arkes, a professor of jurisprudence, recently explained in a letter to the Wall Street Journal why some of us place abortion at the top of our political agendas: "I'd simply offer this plea for a certain exercise of imagination: If some of us look out on the world, informed by the textbooks on embryology and obstetric gynecology, we think we have firm reason to know that [the unborn] are nothing less than human lives that are destroyed in abortions. With a minor flexing of moral reasoning, we think that the justifications needed to take the lives of these small humans must be as compelling as the justifications that are needed to take other human lives. Anyone who looks out on the landscape with that lens sees 1.3 million lives taken in this country each year without the need to render a justification. Therefore, understanding that, where would you place this matter in the overall rank of our public business? Would it be just behind the question of interest rates or the level of taxes? Would you really be surprised that those of us who see things in this way cannot quite put this matter of the 'life issues' at the periphery of our politics? Where then is the

rigidity or the touch of fanaticism—on the part of those who see what is there, and seek moderate steps to address it, or on the part of those who somehow cannot acknowledge that real human beings are killed in these surgeries?" (www.firstthings.com, 05/19/07)

● In a June 20th statement, President George W. Bush discussed his reasons for vetoing a bill on embryonic stem cell research. Near the middle of his remarks, the President said: "Congress has sent me a bill that would overturn [the current Administration's policy on embryonic stem cell research]. If this legislation became law, it would compel American taxpayers—for the first time in our history—to support the deliberate destruction of human embryos. I made it clear to Congress and to the American people that I will not allow our nation to cross this moral line. Last year, Congress passed a similar bill—I kept my promise by vetoing it. And today I'm keeping my word again: I am vetoing the bill that Congress has sent.

"Destroying human life in the hopes of saving human life is not ethical—and it is not the only option before us. We're already seeing remarkable advances in the science and therapeutic uses of stem cells drawn from adults and children, and the blood from umbilical cords—with no harm to the donor. Researchers value embryonic stem cells because they are pluripotent—which means that they have the potential to develop into nearly all the cell types and tissues in the body. Researchers are now developing promising new techniques that offer the potential to produce pluripotent stem cells—without having to

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09/01/07

- * **GONZALES V. CARHART:**
Its importance, its future, and RCRC's ongoing divergence from the UMC on partial-birth abortion
- * **Homosexuality policy:**
Where's the teaching?
- * **General Conference countdown**

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- On April 13 (Easter Friday), President Bush attended and addressed the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC. In his introductory remarks, he admitted to the predominantly Catholic audience: “You know how to make a Methodist feel right at home.” Toward the middle of his speech, President Bush stated: “Renewing the promise of America begins with upholding the dignity of human life. In our day, there is a temptation to manipulate life in ways that do not respect the humanity of the person. When that happens,

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.”

the most vulnerable among us can be valued for their utility to others—instead of their own inherent worth. We must continue to work for a culture of life—where the strong protect the weak, and where we recognize in every human life the image of our Creator.

“Renewing the promise of America requires good citizens who look out for their neighbors. One of the reasons that I am such a strong believer in the power of our faith-based institutions is that they add something the government never can, and that is love. Pope Benedict XVI put it this way in his first letter as Pope: ‘There is no ordering of the state so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love.’ In parishes and neighborhoods across our nation, Catholics take this call to heart—and that is why we find so many of you leading America’s armies of compassion. You are changing America one heart, one soul, at a time, and I thank you...” (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/04/print/20070413.html)♥

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