

PRAY FOR EMILY

Since the beginning of Lifewatch, Rev. Paul Crikelair has played a strong, constructive part in the ministry. If you have attended a Lifewatch Service of Worship on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC during January, you know that Rev. Crikelair faithfully orders and leads the worship service.

On June 10, the Crikelair's were preparing to move from Elverson, PA to a new appointment in Stroudsburg, PA. Paul and Emily, a daughter of 19 years, were doing some yard work. Rain interrupted their project, so they took a break inside the parsonage. When the rain had stopped and the outside air had cooled, Emily and a brother returned to the yard. Thunder suddenly boomed, lightning struck a large tree, and Emily was knocked to the ground. The lightning had also hit Emily directly in the chest and had stopped her heart. CPR was performed, the paramedics arrived, and she was rushed to a local hospital.

Since June 10, Emily has been in a few different medical facilities in eastern Pennsylvania. She has been comatose, then in a "vegetative state," and now in a "minimally conscious state." On August 5, she gave her family and friends renewed hope by giving her best-yet response to the greeting of another patient. Thanks be to God!

Lifewatch is a ministry dedicated to the Gospel of Life. We attempt to witness to the God-given dignity of each person—especially those who cannot defend themselves, such as the unborn child, the dying, the severely injured, and a young woman named Emily Crikelair who was struck by lightning.

In the weeks to come, please pray to God for healing mercies upon Emily. And pray for strength for her dad, Paul, and her mother, Janet, and her brothers and sisters and her larger family. And pray for wisdom and insight for her doctors and nurses. Cards and notes can be sent to the Crikelair's at 316 Clearview Court/Stroudsburg, PA 18360. Also, monetary gifts to support the family can be sent to The Emily Crikelair Fund/210 Crossings Boulevard/PMB 238/Elverson, PA 19520. (Questions concerning the fund may be answered by calling (610)-913-7126.)

Thank you for your loving notice and prayerful response to this tragic event. You are living the Gospel of Life.♥

WE SHALL NOT WEARY, WE SHALL NOT REST

by Rev. Richard John Neuhaus

Once again this year, the National Right to Life convention is partly a reunion of veterans from battles past and partly a youth rally of those recruited for the battles to come. And that is just what it should be. The pro-life movement that began in the 20th century laid the foundation for the pro-life movement of the 21st century. We have been at this a long time, and we are just getting started. All that has been and all that will be is prelude to, and anticipation of, an indomitable hope. All that has been and that will be is premised upon the promise of Our Lord's return in glory when, as we read in the Book of Revelation, "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (21:4, RSV, here and below) And all things will be new.

That is the horizon of hope that, from generation to generation, sustains the great human rights cause of our time and all times—the cause of life. We contend, and we contend relentlessly, for the dignity of the human person, of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, destined from eternity for eternity—every human person, no matter how weak or how strong, no matter how young or how old, no matter how productive or how burdensome, no matter how welcome or how inconvenient. Nobody is a nobody; nobody is unwanted. All are wanted by God, and therefore to be respected, protected, and cherished by us.

We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until every unborn child is protected in law and welcomed in life. We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until all the elderly who have run life's course are protected against despair and abandonment, protected by the rule of law and the bonds of love. We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until every young woman is given the help she needs to recognize the problem of pregnancy as the gift of life. We shall not weary, we shall not rest, as we stand guard at the entrance gates and the exit gates of life, and at every step along the way of life, bearing witness in word and deed to the dignity of the human person—of every human person.

Against the encroaching shadows of the culture of death, against forces commanding immense power and

wealth, against the perverse doctrine that a woman's dignity depends upon her right to destroy her child, against what St. Paul calls the principalities and powers of the present time, this convention renews our resolve that we shall not weary, we shall not rest, until the culture of life is reflected in the rule of law and lived in the law of love.

It has been a long journey, and there are still miles and miles to go. Some say it started with the notorious *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973 when, by what Justice Byron White called an act of raw judicial power, the United States Supreme Court wiped from the books of all fifty states every law protecting the unborn child. But it goes back long before that. Some say it started with the agitation for "liberalized abortion law" in the 1960s when the novel doctrine was proposed that a woman cannot be fulfilled unless she has the right to destroy her child. But it goes back long before that. It goes back to the movements for eugenics and racial and ideological cleansing of the last century.

Whether led by enlightened liberals, such as Margaret Sanger, or brutal totalitarians, whose names live in infamy, the doctrine and the practice was that some people stood in the way of progress and were therefore non-persons, living, as it was said, "lives unworthy of life." But it goes back even before that. It goes back to the institution of slavery in which human beings were declared to be chattel property to be bought and sold and used and discarded at the whim of their masters. It goes way on back.

As Pope John Paul the Great wrote in his historic message *Evangelium Vitae* (the Gospel of Life), the culture of death goes all the way back to that fateful afternoon when Cain struck down his brother Abel, and the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And Cain answered, "[A]m I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said to Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." (Genesis 4) The voice of the blood of brothers and sisters beyond numbering cry out from the slave ships and battlegrounds and concentration camps and torture chambers of the past and the present. The voice of the blood of the innocents cries out from the abortuaries and sophisticated biotech laboratories of this beloved country today. Contending for the culture of life has been a very long journey, and there are still miles and miles to go.

The culture of death is an idea before it is a deed. I expect many of us here, perhaps most of us here, can remember when we were first encountered by the idea. For me, it was in the 1960s when I was pastor of a very poor, very black, inner city parish in Brooklyn, New York. I had read that week an article by Ashley Montagu of Princeton University on what he called "A Life Worth Living." He listed the qualifications for a life worth living: good health, a stable family, economic security, educational opportunity, the prospect of a satisfying career to realize the fullness of one's potential. These were among the measures of

what was called "a life worth living."

And I remember vividly, as though it were yesterday, looking out the next Sunday morning at the congregation of St. John the Evangelist and seeing all those older faces creased by hardship endured and injustice afflicted, and yet radiating hope undimmed and love unconquered. And I saw that day the younger faces of children deprived of most, if not all, of those qualifications on Prof. Montagu's list. And it struck me then, like a bolt of lightning, a bolt of lightning that illuminated our moral and cultural moment, that Prof. Montagu and those of like mind believed that the people of St. John the Evangelist—people whom I knew and had come to love as people of faith and kindness and endurance and, by the grace of God, hope unvanquished—it struck me then that, by the criteria of the privileged and enlightened, none of these my people had a life worth living. In that moment, I knew that a great evil was afoot. The culture of death is an idea before it is a deed.

In that moment, I knew that I had been recruited to the cause of the culture of life. To be recruited to the cause of the culture of life is to be recruited for the duration; and there is no end in sight, except to the eyes of faith.

Perhaps you, too, can specify such a moment when you knew you were recruited. At that moment you could have said, "Yes, it's terrible that in this country alone 4,000 innocent children are killed every day, but then so many terrible things are happening in the world. Am I my infant brother's keeper? Am I my infant sister's keeper?" You could have said that, but you didn't. You could have said, "Yes, the nation that I love is betraying its founding principles—that every human being is endowed by God with inalienable rights, including, and most foundationally, the right to life. But," you could have said, "the Supreme Court has spoken and its word is the law of the land. What can I do about it?" You could have said that, but you didn't. That horror, that betrayal, would not let you go. You knew, you knew there and then, that you were recruited to contend for the culture of life, and that you were recruited for the duration.

The contention between the culture of life and the culture of death is not a battle of our own choosing. We are not the ones who imposed upon the nation the lethal logic that human beings have no rights we are bound to respect if they are too small, too weak, too dependent, too burdensome. That lethal logic, backed by the force of law, was imposed by an arrogant elite that for almost forty years has been telling us to get over it, to get used to it.

But "We the People," who are the political sovereign in this constitutional democracy, have not gotten over it, we have not gotten used to it, and we will never, we will never ever, agree that the culture of death is the unchangeable law of the land.

"We the People" have not and will not ratify the lethal logic of *Roe v. Wade*. That notorious decision of

1973 is the most consequential moral and political event of the last half century of our nation's history. It has produced a dramatic realignment of moral and political forces, led by evangelicals and Catholics together, and joined by citizens beyond numbering who know that how we respond to this horror defines who we are as individuals and as a people. Our opponents, once so confident, are now on the defensive. Having lost the argument with the American people, they desperately cling to the dictates of the courts. No longer able to present themselves as the wave of the future, they watch in dismay as a younger generation recoils in horror from the bloodletting of an abortion industry so arrogantly imposed by judges beyond the rule of law.

We do not know, and we do not need to know, how the battle for the dignity of the human person will be resolved. God knows, and that is enough. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta and saints beyond numbering have taught us, our task is not to be successful but to be faithful. Yet in that faithfulness is the lively hope of success. We are the stronger because we are unburdened by delusions. We know that in a sinful world, far short of the promised Kingdom of God, there will always be great evils. The principalities and powers will continue to rage, but they will not prevail.

In the midst of the encroaching darkness of the culture of death, we have heard the voice of him who said, "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Because he has overcome, we shall overcome. We do not know when; we do not know how. God knows, and that is enough. We know the justice of our cause, we trust in the faithfulness of his promise, and therefore we shall not weary, we shall not rest.

Whether, in this great contest between the culture of life and the culture of death, we were recruited many years ago or whether we were recruited only yesterday, we have been recruited for the duration. We go from this convention refreshed in our resolve to fight the good fight. We go from this convention trusting in the words of the prophet Isaiah that "[those] who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (40:31)

The journey has been long, and there are miles and miles to go. But from this convention the word is carried to every neighborhood, every house of worship, every congressional office, every state house, every precinct of this our beloved country—from this convention the word is carried that, until every human being created in the image and likeness of God—no matter how small or how weak, no matter how old or how burdensome—until every human being created in the image and likeness of God is protected in law and cared for in life, we shall not weary, we shall not rest. And, in this the great human rights struggle of our time and all times, we shall overcome.

—Rev. Neuhaus is a Roman Catholic priest in New York City and the editor in chief of *First Things*. This was his closing address, delivered on July 5, to the 2008 National Right to Life Convention in Arlington, VA. It first appeared at www.firstthings.com. ♥

WHAT'S UP WITH THE NUMBERS?

People on both sides of the abortion debate use numbers and statistics to support their positions. For many years, pro-choice advocates have claimed that, prior to the *Roe v. Wade* decision, thousands, perhaps millions, of women died from illegal abortions. Posters of metal coat hangers are used to depict the presumed danger of returning to the "pre-Roe" days. At the same time, pro-life proponents contend that those claims are grossly exaggerated to further the pro-choice political agenda. How does one know whom to believe or which numbers to accept? What is the truth about the numbers? For your consideration, we will present some statistics and some context for the statistics.

No one knows for sure how many illegal abortions were performed before 1973. One reason is that people do not report illegal activities. (If you had just vandalized a car or broken into a convenience store, would you tell the authorities? Of course not.) Regarding abortion before 1973, neither the woman nor the person performing the abortion wanted it known. No records were kept.

We now know that claims of thousands of women dying from illegal abortions were simply made up. Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson—co-founder with Lawrence Lader of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), medical doctor, and abortionist-turned-prolifer—admitted as much: "How many deaths were we talking about when abortion was illegal? In NARAL we generally emphasized the drama of the individual case, not the mass statistics, but when we spoke of the latter it was always '5,000 to 10,000 deaths a year.' I confess that I knew the figures were totally false, and I suppose the others did too if they stopped to think of it. But in the 'morality' of our revolution, it was a *useful* figure, widely accepted, so why go out of our way to correct it with honest statistics? The overriding concern was to get the laws eliminated, and anything within reason that had to be done was permissible." (*Aborting America*, p. 193)

Since the 1940s, the United States has kept records of maternal deaths due to a combination of spontaneous abortion (miscarriage), legally induced abortion, and illegally induced abortion. Due primarily to improved medical care and the introduction of penicillin and other antibiotics, the number of women who died from abortions decreased from 256 in 1956 to 39 in 1972 (the year before *Roe v. Wade*). These numbers are decidedly lower than the thousands or millions put forth by pro-choice advocates.

Records for legal abortion data in the United States come from two sources: from the federal Centers for

Disease Control (CDC) and from the private Guttmacher Institute (the research arm of Planned Parenthood).

The CDC began collecting data in 1969—two years after California, and the year before New York state, legalized abortion on demand—using data received from the various state and local health agencies. According to the CDC, legal abortions totaled 615,000 in 1973, peaked at 1,429,00 in 1990, and have steadily decreased since then. In 2002, the CDC reported 854,122 legally induced abortions.

For those same years, the Guttmacher Institute reported 745,000, 1,554,000, and 1,293,000 legal abortions.

Since 1973, the Guttmacher Institute has obtained its records from four types of abortion providers: abortion clinics, hospitals, other non-hospital clinics, and physicians' offices. In a more recent report, Guttmacher authors admitted that the CDC reports are incomplete because the accuracy of the reporting varies. That is certainly true, as the following examples demonstrate: "From 1973 through 1997, [CDC] data were received from or estimated for 52 reporting areas in the United States: 50 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City." (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, CDC, November 29, 2002, p. 1) Later reports came from: all 50 states and the District of Columbia; 48 reporting areas; and 49 reporting areas in the United States (47 states [excluding California, New Hampshire, and West Virginia], the District of Columbia, and New York City). The current CDC report also admits that "not all areas collected data on some or all characteristics of women who obtained abortions, and the availability of such data varied by reporting area." (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, CDC, November 23, 2007, p. 2)

In summary, abortion numbers prior to 1973 were inflated to advance a pro-choice agenda. Since 1973, when abortion became legal, the figures published by the Guttmacher Institute are more accurate than those from the Centers for Disease Control—but all of them are merely estimates. The actual number of abortions performed in the United States may well be greater than is reported.

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

If you would like to receive this article, with a complete set of footnotes, please contact Cindy Evans at P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338/(636)-294-2344/lifewatch@charter.net. ♥

WHEN ETERNITY IS AT STAKE: RAPE, ABORTION, AND MINISTRY

by Nicole W. Cooley

"The day came to visit my pastor. I eagerly awaited her advice. I had elevated her to a trusted source of help. I wrongly assumed since she had been to seminary, she was an expert on matters of God and

faith. I was hopeful she would help me understand what God meant when He said I could endure the pregnancy but didn't have to [do so alone].

"She began with, 'First of all, Nicole, let me put your mind at ease. Any decision, prayerfully considered, is OK in the eyes of the church.' I was stunned. This was not what I expected at all. This didn't square with my own recollection of Scripture and I shook off my doubts, thinking she must know more than I do. I had always believed the church should guide decisions concerning abortion. My church apparently said it was OK, and this was enough for me. I believed this decision came about from a change in the mandates of Scripture which God somehow endorsed through the changes in tradition and conventional wisdom.

"She went on to tell me about her daughters who had also faced my dilemma. One chose abortion and the other adoption. Both choices were equally good, I was assured. She then told me there was a couple at the church who wanted to adopt, but she didn't press the issue. Perhaps in my eyes, she could see that the death sentence had already been proclaimed on my unborn child. My heart had closed with her opening statement. I felt justified in the escape plan I believed would help me mend my heart." (Into the Light, pp. 21-22)

The United Methodist pastor I wrote about in my book, Into the Light: Rape, Abortion, and the Truth that Set Me Free, wasted the opportunity to be "Jesus with skin on" for me. Instead of opening the Bible and helping me to apply its wisdom, she quoted from The Book of Discipline. It breaks my heart that the church which nurtured my faith would also be the one to encourage me to kill my unborn child. I grieve for the women who have also been led astray by this false teaching and have not found their way back to God's grace. I also continue to pray the church will learn that, when eternity is at stake, it is more important to be "Biblically correct" than "politically correct."

Women in crisis do not make the best decisions. As I describe in my book, at the time of my rape and pregnancy, I was emotionally unstable and battled irrational thoughts arising from a nightmare on the night of the rape. I believe this battle began in the Garden of Eden when God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed." (Genesis 3:15, RSV) God has created women to be nurturers and protectors of children. For a woman to go against this innate design through the intentional killing of her unborn child is self-destructive on multiple levels. It is not surprising that the risk of suicide, substance abuse, and mental disorder increases dramatically for women following an abortion. It is the role of the church to point us to Jesus and His truth. What would Jesus have us do?

The Bible warns against trying to walk with one foot in the world and one in the Word. We cannot serve two masters—we will inevitably end up hating one of them. It is illogical to believe that God somehow

blesses some pregnancies and removes Himself from others. He is the God and Creator of all—or He is not God at all. God was there the night of my rape—and He chose to give me the best gift of all on the darkest night of my life. Through my painful journey, God has shown me that when given the opportunity, He can take the mired clay of my life and make something truly remarkable with it. Countless times, God has used my story to bless others and encourage them to find the healing in Him that I enjoy.

“I have often fantasized that my story ended along these lines. My pastor would have encouraged meeting the couple at my parents’ church desiring adoption. I would have met with them and asked them to pray about my baby, and God would have opened their hearts wide to receive him, despite the risks. I have since met adoptive parents with hearts for special children. I would have an open adoption. For me this would have meant a Christmas card every year with pictures and stories of my son’s life. (His due date was the beginning of December and the reason many Decembers were emotionally difficult for me, until God began to heal me.) When my son was not quite two years old, I would have called the parents with the news—I do not have the gene for NF2. I would see, firsthand, that my son looked like me and not like the man who raped me. I could have rejoiced in knowing the purpose of my pain had been fulfilled in this life as well.” (*Into the Light*, pp. 181-182)

When eternity is at stake—both for the woman and her unborn child—the church must rise to stand on Biblical truth. The church must not allow itself to be swayed by the popular opinion of the day in its endorsement of abortion. Rather, it should serve as a voice of the Eternal One to bring hope to women in crisis and to those struggling in the aftermath of an abortion.

—Nicole Cooley, of Fort Irwin, CA, is no longer a member of The United Methodist Church, because of the church’s official position on abortion. She considers *Lifewatch* to be an answer to her countless prayers for change in the church. She is hopeful the church will remove misleading language about abortion from *The Book of Discipline* and discontinue its association with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Her book, *Into the Light* (*Pleasant Word*), is available at www.winepressbooks.com or 1-(877)-421-7323. ♥

A CLASH OF TWO VISIONS

by Dr. Stephen Rankin

General Conference 2008, amidst some really wonderful decisions about The United Methodist Church’s future mission, demonstrated for the tenth,

“Countless times, God has used my story to bless others and encourage them to find the healing in Him that I enjoy.”

consecutive time (since 1972) our deep division over homosexual practice. It does seem to be tearing us apart and, though it is rather lame to say it this way, the big reason is a clash of visions. Both are visions of

justice, but they are not the ones we normally see at odds in the church’s ongoing polemics.

I work in a United Methodist-related college as professor and campus minister, and I think our recent experience here may be emblematic of the clash. It goes far beyond the specific terms of our debates: about Biblical authority, or whether or not God created gay people as gay people. It illustrates the inherent opposition between the values of a liberal-democratic state (e.g., the rights of individual citizens) and those of the Church (to live as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation). The question is: does our college’s institutional policy of non-discrimination trump our church-related status? More to the point, can a campus-ministry unit within an institution of higher education legitimately ‘discriminate’ while the school, even though private, maintains its non-discrimination policy?...

[In what follows but is omitted here, Dr. Rankin reports how Southwestern College responded to a matter related to homosexuality.]

In the end, I wish I could say that we have come up with a holy and workable resolution to our college dilemma, but we have not. As I mentioned [in the omitted section], the lesbian students who came out also left the organizations in question. In a sense, they “solved” the problem for us, but I can tell you, it is no solution. For starters, I miss the interaction with those students. I also miss the chance for our community to be forced, in a sense, to figure out how to live together when we do not agree. Most importantly, we will face this dilemma again, and what will we do the next time? Does it have to remain this way? Are we facing an intractable problem?

To be frank, I think we may be—unless the “solution” comes through the assertion of raw legal and judicial power. On the issue of same-sex coupling, at least, we have two visions of justice in play, one of the “communal good” based (ironically) on individual rights, and the other rooted in an attempt to embody—through Christianity’s communal, sexual ethics—God’s holy nature and will. I realize that I am not really saying anything particularly profound here. I can tell you that, personally, it has made me think more frequently about Jesus’ words to His disciples: “No one can serve two masters...” (Matthew 6:24, RSV)

In establishing one vision of justice, the government clearly has the stronger coercive power. A bill signed into law means that we must obey, unless we are willing to suffer the consequences of disobedience. As the California Supreme Court has recently shown us again, there may come a time when

same-sex “marriages” will be the law of the land; and, as a functionary of the state in performing marriages, I, as clergy, may have to face this dilemma in a particularly acute way. For the time being, in our college’s case, I am not sure what the consequences might be the next time we have to decide what to do.

So, I am doing my best to live as St. Paul enjoins us: “If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:18) Also, I find comfort in the truth that “God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Psalm 145:8) And in the truth that there is grace sufficient for today...

—*Dr. Rankin is a professor of religious studies and campus minister at Southwestern College in Winfield, KS. If you would like the entire text of Dr. Rankin’s article, please email him at Steve.Rankin@sckans.edu.*♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- You are invited—even encouraged!—to send a gift to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338. You can give to Lifewatch also through PayPal on our homepage at www.lifewatch.org. Now you can support this ministry in another way. You can support Lifewatch’s mission and ministry by donating stocks (since we recently opened a “DTC Brokerage Account”). For more information, please contact Cindy Evans at the Lifewatch office.

- [A Love for Life: Christianity’s Consistent Protection of the Unborn](#), by Dennis Di Mauro, has just been published by Wipf and Stock (Eugene, OR). In a day when the various Protestant denominations are teaching various perspectives on life and abortion, this book makes clear that historic Christianity has maintained a consistent “love for life”—a consistent love for the the unborn child and mother. Di Mauro also demonstrates that, even today, the vast majority of churches and Christians are devoted to the defense of the unborn child and mother. To order your copy of this excellent book, complete and mail the book coupon, that is found on p. 7 in this newsletter, with a \$10.00 check to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338.

- Interesting that [NEWS-United Methodist Women](#) (Summer 2008), in reporting on 2008 General Conference outcomes related to the United Methodist Women, does not mention that the conference voted (by a very narrow margin) to maintain The United Methodist Church’s affiliation with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). That means the Women’s Division can continue membership in RCRC. And that means that every UMW (United Methodist Women) unit throughout the denomination is institutionally linked to RCRC. So, why was there no mention of the General Conference vote on RCRC? Does the Women’s Division, or somebody at the Women’s Division, believe that referring to RCRC would be harmful? Does RCRC, its

radically pro-choice work, and its link to the Women’s Division embarrass some United Methodists? We are just wondering.

- At General Conference 2008 there was talk about The United Methodist Church staying affiliated with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), so that United Methodists could maintain a place at the RCRC table and influence RCRC’s mission in American society. In response, it should be said that Christ’s Church should not be present at some organizational “tables” in our society. For example, the Church should not be a part of a Ku Klux Klan table, an anti-Semitic table, or an anti-Israel table. Nor should The United Methodist Church be seated at a RCRC-sponsored table. After all, RCRC is partially responsible for keeping abortion-on-demand the law of our land for over 30 years.

- Two sentences in the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, both of which were recently approved by votes of the 2008 General Conference, continue to cause great consternation throughout the denomination. Think of it: two sentences! One controversial sentence pertains to abortion: “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.” The other controversial sentence concerns homosexual practice: “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” The first sentence, on abortion, is out of step with the teaching of the Bible and the Tradition of the Church catholic. Because some United Methodists notice that our denomination’s teaching on life and abortion is inconsistent with historic Christianity, controversy follows. (This is the reason for Lifewatch’s ministry.) The second sentence, on homosexual practice, is in step with the Bible’s teaching and the Church’s Tradition. Because a relatively small minority of United Methodists is dissatisfied with Biblical-Traditional teaching on homosexual practice, controversy follows. As the controversies on both matters continue, we United Methodists are always wise to be guided, in our belief and practice, by the Bible and the Tradition. Why? Because God speaks and works through Scripture and through the Tradition that Scripture generates.

- Sometimes it seems the controversy in The United Methodist Church becomes too much to tolerate. So this person or that family leaves United Methodism for another church. Since United Methodism has become somewhat therapeutic (i.e., feel-good) in much of its life, such departures are going to happen with some regularity. In addition, an unfortunate decision by the Judicial Council, particularly on matters related to homosexuality, could cause many to reconsider their membership in The United Methodist Church.

How should people think about their church membership, when their membership in the church becomes difficult? The one-word answer is covenant. Covenant. God works through the baptismal covenant to

build us into His Church. Entering or renewing the baptismal covenant, we vow to renounce and resist evils (one of which is splintering and undermining the Church). Then we confess Jesus Christ as Savior, and we promise to serve Him as Lord (as He is the Lord of the Church). Finally, we promise to be faithful to the Church catholic (which opposes church shopping and hopping), loyalty to The United Methodist Church (which suggests staying put), and participation in a United Methodist congregation (which keeps us practically engaged).

To leave, or not to leave, The United Methodist Church? If that is your question, recall your vows in the baptismal covenant. And by God's grace, be faithful to them.

- The August 1, 2008 "Word from Winkler"—Mr. Jim Winkler, that is, at the General Board of Church and Society—was entitled "Perception vs. Truth." In the article, Mr. Winkler takes truth, historical truth, seriously. Thanks be to God. And he quotes Joseph Goebbels and Vladimir Lenin, who did not take truth seriously.

One of the greatest truth-tellers of our time, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, died about the same time that "Perception vs. Truth" appeared on the Internet. Again and again, Solzhenitsyn, you will recall, wrote powerfully about the truth of Soviet Union killing 60,000,000 of its own citizens. Even the threats and machinery of a totalitarian state could not repress the truth he served. Thank God for this man, his life, and his work.

Do American society and The United Methodist Church need a Solzhenitsyn-like character to tell the

truth about abortion, compellingly and persuasively, throughout our land? Most definitely. After all, there have been more than 50,000,000 unborn victims of abortion since 1973—and that does not include the born victims.

- Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Rome), recently addressed the Anglican bishops at their Lambeth Conference. On July 22, in "Mission, Social Justice, and Evangelization," he said: "In the face of such a world context, we Christians—and bishops, in the first place—can ill afford to remain on the sidelines as passive spectators, or to fall back on a purely maintenance mode, trying to cling on to worn-out cliches, and hiding our light under a bushel (Matthew 5:15). True to our mission to be 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world' and 'leaven in the dough,' we must be pro-active, and not merely reactive, in reading the signs of the times and projecting our missionary thrust, firmly convinced that He who holds the destinies of humankind in His hands has promised to be with His disciples till the end of time. And hence, as a Chinese proverb goes: 'Instead of cursing the darkness, let us light a candle.'" (www.zenit.org/article-23314?I=english, emphasis added)

- Demonstrating what Cardinal Dias was calling for, Bishop Allen Vigneron of the Catholic Diocese of Oakland wrote, after the announcement of the recent California Supreme Court decision that legalized homosexual "marriage" in California: "In regard to the short term: As faithful citizens, Catholics are called to bring our laws regarding marriage into conformity with what we know about the nature of marriage. In the long

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term: If such efforts fail, our way of life will become counter-cultural, always a difficult situation for Christians—one our forebears faced in many ages past, one that the Lord himself predicted for us. Indeed, even if such efforts meet with success, our work is far from done. We would still be living in a society where many accept a set of convictions that is ultimately detrimental to the integrity of human life, with negative consequences for one's happiness in this world and the next. Your mission then will be, as it always has been, to be a light and leaven for the new creation established in Christ." (www.catholic.org/docs/bishopVigneronMarriageStatement.pdf)

- One the the greatest privileges and opportunities of my life and ministry was working with Rev. Richard John Neuhaus in New York City. From 1984 until 1989, we were a part of The Center on Religion and Society, and we published The Religion and Society Report and a series of conference books from Eerdmans. From 1989 until 1990, we founded The Institute on Religion and Public Life, and we began publishing First Things. Even now, nearly twenty years later, I am always inspired and instructed by Rev. Neuhaus' preaching and speaking—not to mention his writing.

So, this summer over the Fourth of July weekend, I planned to hear Rev. Neuhaus' closing address at the 2008 National Right to Life Convention (a version of which is found above) in Arlington, VA. Immediately after the conclusion of his excellent speech, a few minutes after 11:00 p.m., I ran to my car parked across

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 street. (Therefore and unfortunately, I missed an invitation to offer the evening's benediction.) Driving through the night, I arrived home (in Morehead City, NC) at 5:30 a.m. A couple hours sleep fortified this pastor enough to lead (or try to lead) a couple of Sunday morning worship services. The long, Sunday afternoon nap was most welcome.

The bottom line of this report: the Neuhaus speech was well worth the all-night drive. When you read it, you too will be inspired and instructed, I am sure.

- Late Saturday afternoon during the National Right to Life Convention, this United Methodist pastor was honored to lead a worship service for the Protestants attending the convention. Next door and at the same time, Father Frank Pavone celebrated the Mass with the Roman Catholics attending the convention. After our service ended, all the Protestants were invited to join the Catholics for a concluding, common prayer. This was a particularly powerful and joyous celebration of Christian unity in the Gospel of Life.

—Paul T. Stallsworth ♥

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