

A FAVOR, PLEASE

We are very thankful that you are receiving and reading Lifewatch. As happens with a newsletter mailed to a mobile readership, the name on the mailing label oftentimes does not match the name of the one reading the newsletter. If the name and address on this issue of Lifewatch label are not yours, we have a favor to ask of you: please contact Mrs. Cindy Evans of Lifewatch—1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043/(573)-896-2582 (telephone and fax)/ Lifewatch@mchsi.com (e-mail)—to change your mailing label to your name and address. And you could do an additional favor for Lifewatch by informing Mrs. Evans of the new address for the person who is named on your current label. Your assistance will help to make our mailing list more accurate and our witness more efficiently offered. Many, many thanks, in advance, for your response to this request.♥

A LIFEWATCH DOCUMENT

On September 23, 2004, an interreligious group of people assembled for a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The group proposed that a pro-life position is necessary, if not sufficient, for public and political service today. Though not personally represented at the press conference, Lifewatch contributed a news release that was distributed to the gathered members of the media. For your information, it follows. —Editor

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Thursday, September 23, 2004

UNITED METHODISTS CONNECT PRO-LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICE

The United Methodist Church is not a community disengaged and isolated from the general society, its public life and its politics. Instead, The United Methodist Church is a Christian community that, for the advancement of justice, willingly and regularly engages the issues of the day in the public arena.

Throughout its history, American Methodism has generously given attention, energy, and resources to public ministry to promote one, overarching social principle: respect for the human dignity and natural rights of “the least of these” (Matthew 25). Because of

their lack of standing, status, and/or strength, the least in this world often suffer at the hands of the powerful. Therefore, Methodists have always stood with, and for, the poor, the person of color, the immigrant, the refugee, the religious minority, the ill, the dying, and others who have been marginalized.

Today the unborn child is the most threatened member of the human community. The number of unborn children destroyed by abortion each year in the United States—well over 1.25 million—makes the protection of the unborn child and mother society’s most urgent challenge. Like no other domestic problem, abortion directly assaults the dignity and natural rights of the human person. Like no other domestic problem, abortion is an exercise of raw power against the weakest.

As the 2004 elections draw near, United Methodists of all political persuasions will be encouraged to vote. Many, if not most, United Methodists will vote for candidates because they are committed to respecting the human dignity and natural rights of each and every member of society.

Only those candidates who favor increasing protection of the unborn child and mother, only those candidates who favor building a culture of life, deserve the votes of United Methodists and others. Likewise, politicians content with the status quo (with its million-plus abortions per year) show themselves unworthy of support or election. After all, elections should advance public justice, human dignity, and natural rights—not the opposite.

Lifewatch, which is also known as the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, is a network of laity, clergy, and congregations within The United Methodist Church that witnesses to the Gospel of Life.♥

“UNITY AND SEXUALITY”

On September 17, 2004, the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council—meeting in Port Elizabeth, South Africa—adopted an important, theological statement entitled “Unity and Sexuality.” Since this statement serves well the Gospel and the Church, and since it received little notice in the denominational press, it is offered below. —Editor

“The Chairperson, His Eminence Sunday Mbang, in his opening address to this Executive, called for a response to the widespread debate ‘within the churches on the subject of human sexuality.’ He asserted ‘the unity of the Church is gradually beginning to suffer’ as a result of significant tensions. He observed the impact of new and unfamiliar interpretations of the Scriptures to the confusion of many faithful Christians. We also have record of its adverse effect on our Christian mission.

“Several churches have worked for many years to find a way to respond to the pastoral needs of their people in the face of changing attitudes to sexual orientation and sexual practice in our societies and cultures, acknowledging that our sexuality is one of the gifts of God in creation. (The issue is sharpened in many cases where a call to ordained ministry is involved.)

“It must be observed that there is no ethical consensus in the world at large on these and related matters. For Christians, there is a tension between the desire to respond in love to all God’s

creatures in the light of the Gospel’s universal promises, and the need to discern God’s will in rapidly changing circumstances. Additionally, we must be concerned for the health of the nations and the future of the entire human family.

“In our review of ecumenical relationships, it is clear that at least one Christian World Communion has been internally disrupted as a result of the actions of certain individuals and councilor bodies; its survival is at stake. Others with whom we remain in dialogue have firmly reasserted classical Christian teaching on these matters. Some of our own member churches have come to the brink of division or have lost members through precipitate action.

“It is acknowledged that this Executive is unlikely to give more satisfactory answers than those which have resulted from long thought and discussion in our churches; it desires only to sound a note of warning. It takes with complete seriousness the issues involved, scriptural and doctrinal, medical and ethical. It urges the churches to apply their energies and best minds to the challenges, as we all seek God’s light. It urges the churches to endeavor to preserve the bond of peace and love with *all* their members. But it equally urges the member churches to hold firmly to the centrality of Scripture, to the long Christian tradition of teaching on the order of creation, on marriage and family life, and to exercise immense care as they face choices which could threaten the unity of congregations and churches.” (emphasis by underlining is added) ♥

“... hold firmly to the centrality of Scripture, to the long Christian tradition of teaching on the order of creation, on marriage and family life...”

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES, MAYBE

The letter below, written for publication in Lifewatch, is from Mr. James E. Winkler, the General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society. The open letter that follows Mr. Winkler’s epistle, in italics, is from your scribe. —Editor

October 4, 2004

Dear Paul,

I received your letter and the enclosed copy of Lifewatch [09/01/04]. I am so very sorry to learn of the loss of your daughter. That was an unexpected piece of tragic news. My prayers are with you and your family.

You graciously invited me to respond to an earlier piece printed in Lifewatch [“The March for Women’s

Lives and The United Methodist Church,”

06/01/04], and I accepted in good faith. However, after

reading your response to my letter [“Correspondence on

the March for Women’s Lives,” Lifewatch, 09/01/04],

I must say that I feel I was set up and believe that

continuing conversation through the pages of

Lifewatch is

counterproductive. Your dissection of my letter and use of words such as “betrayal” and degrading phrases such as “sullied The United Methodist Church” and “led The United Methodist Church to participate in the demoralization of American society...and the undermining of Christian unity” can only distance us from one another. Neither do I believe this is consistent with your call for dialogue.

As a general secretary of one of our denomination’s agencies, I cannot imagine extending an invitation for someone to respond to an article in our magazine, Christian Society Action, and then replying with accusations and inflammatory phrases. I realize you do not have that responsibility as an independent organization.

I take the mandate to GBCS [General Board of Church and Society] from General Conference very seriously. The “Social Principles” are guidelines for our denomination, and we are charged to interpret them. This is what we did regarding our participation in the March.

Sincerely,

James E. Winkler

General Secretary

November 8, 2004

Dear Jim:

In our telephone conversation earlier this week, I expressed my personal gratitude to you for your letter of October 4th. I am especially grateful for your kind expression of sympathy and for your prayers that are responsive to our loss of our beloved Paige.

You said in our conversation that your letter was written for publication, so it appears above. And as you would expect, in what follows, I will respond to several of what I take to be your most pertinent points and conclude with a plea.

Our dialogue, as you know, has to do with the General Board of Church and Society co-sponsoring the April 25th March for Women's Lives in Washington, DC. As an observer of the March, I wrote an extensive report on it for Lifewatch (06/01/04). For the purpose of ongoing dialogue, I wrote to you to invite your response to my report. You responded with your July 21st letter, which appeared in the 09/01/04 issue of Lifewatch, along with my response to your July letter.

As your October 4th letter states, you felt as if you had been "set up." For three reasons, I was quite surprised by your reaction to my critique of your letter. First, I had invited you into a dialogue about these very significant matters, and a dialogue suggests continuing conversation, disagreement, and even respectful argument. Therefore, I had assumed that you would expect a response to your letter. Jim, can you imagine that Lifewatch would simply grant you the last word on matters related to the March? Of course not. Again, we are in a moral-theological dialogue, which demands that we serve truth and love, over time, in numerous exchanges. Second, periodicals that print letters to the editor often answer such letters, sometimes in detail. In this regard, Lifewatch is not unusual. Letters Lifewatch receives and publishes are often responded to, in detail or not. Yours was not an exception. And third, since you are the General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, you speak and write with no small amount of denominational authority. Your spoken and written words are taken seriously by all United Methodists and by Lifewatch. Hence, their significance calls for a response, even if the response is not agreeable to you.

You strongly objected to the tone of my response to your October 4th letter. In particular, you were offended by my last two paragraphs. In our telephone conversation, you mentioned that these paragraphs were, in your opinion, "over the top." You were particularly disturbed by these sentences: "By co-sponsoring this March, they [Mr. Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society] 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."

I readily admit that this language is straightforward and tough. Even so, I believe this language to be appropriate and accurate. The problem before us is not the language that was employed, which you characterized as accusatory and "inflammatory." The problem before us is a troubling March and United Methodism's participation in that troubling

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

March. The language is bold because the March was an exercise in pro-choice, actually pro-abortion, politics that left no room for discussion, disagreement, or dissent. The March vigorously favored abortion rights for all abortions (and all abortions), in all circumstances, no questions asked. The March gave no moral consideration to the unborn child and no compassion to the woman in post-abortion trauma. The March understood abortion rights and abortions themselves as goods that our society and its citizens should seek, the more the better. (Jim, since you did not attend the March, I humbly ask you to reread my report on it.) The March, all in all, contradicted in style and substance what The United Methodist Church believes in and stands for. United Methodism, at its best, offers uncompromised and pure witness in the political arena. United Methodism, at its best, wants to: increase public and personal morality throughout America; broaden and deepen constructive, moral-political discourse in church and society; enrich our general culture with the good, the true, and the beautiful; and advance Christian unity among all churches and Christians. In my opinion, the March, undermined all of these aims.

You were also deeply bothered by the use of the word "betrayed." But the March led its United Methodist co-sponsors to set aside, for a brief time, their United Methodist identity and teaching. The March caused its United Methodist co-sponsors to be unfaithful to the Social Principles on abortion (Paragraph 161J, The Book of Discipline). To betray is to be unfaithful. "Betray" is one of those words that is difficult to write and to read, but it accurately describes what occurred on April 25th: for the March led its United Methodist co-sponsors to betray, to be unfaithful to, the official United Methodist teaching on abortion. This is not a wild charge based on emotion and opinion; it is an accurate assertion based on fact.

To be sure, the General Board of Church and Society is charged, as you note, to interpret the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church. That is the rub, for Lifewatch believes that, by co-sponsoring the March for Women's Lives, Church and Society misinterpreted Paragraph 161J of the Social Principles. Lifewatch is basing that judgment on current United Methodist teaching on abortion, not on what the Lifewatch community thinks that teaching should be.

Some might ask, Why does Lifewatch so passionately maintain its concern over United Methodist participation in the March for Women's Lives? The answer is that since the United Methodist bodies that co-sponsored the March were held accountable by neither a bishop, nor the Council of Bishops, nor another official United Methodist agency, Lifewatch was compelled to enter an accountability

mode. For if the United Methodist co-sponsors of the March are not held accountable to The Book of Discipline in this case, they will certainly co-sponsor another pro-choice/pro-abortion

March in the future. From this dialogue, Lifewatch desires only one thing: for the General Board of Church and Society simply to admit that it made a mistake in co-sponsoring the March for Women's Lives, which opposed official United Methodist teaching on abortion. That is all. A simple apology.

Which brings me to a concluding plea: please continue this dialogue with Lifewatch. After all, this kind of moral-theological dialogue is good for The United Methodist Church, for the institutions we serve, and for those United Methodists who are carefully following it. Our dialogue can sharpen thinking, uncover common ground, and clarify disagreements. To be sure, this dialogue is personally difficult for both of us. But I believe that our baptismal covenant demands engaging, truth-serving, respectful dialogue of us.

I hope and pray that you will decide that our conversation, in the bonds of the baptismal covenant, must continue and move forward.

Be faithful in all things.

In Christ,

(The Rev.) Paul T. Stallsworth
Pastor, and Editor of Lifewatch ♥

WESLEY AND WAINWRIGHT ON SEPARATION

Since the 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh, there has been discussion, among some United Methodists, about an “amicable separation” of The United Methodist Church. Professor Geoffrey Wainwright, who holds the Cushman Chair of Christian Theology at Duke University's Divinity School, places this discussion of separation in an historical-theological context. His “Schisms, Heresies and the Gospel: Wesleyan Reflections on Evangelical Truth and Ecclesial Unity,” a chapter in Ancient and Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century/Essays in Honor of Thomas C. Oden (InterVarsity Press, 2002), also provides solid guidance for today's challenges.

Drawing heavily from John Wesley's sermon “On Schism” (1786), Prof. Wainwright quotes and notes: “To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love;’ and such ‘schism’—schism in the ‘remote’ sense [‘remote’ because it was ‘not strictly scriptural’]—‘is both evil in itself, and productive of evil consequences:’ ‘It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the

“It is the nature of love to unite us together ...”

love the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from

our brethren. And this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren. The pretenses for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause; otherwise they would still hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’

“Such separation does harm to those who leave, to those who are left behind and to ‘the whole world in general’ in so far as—by its loveless nature and consequences—such separation or schism hardens unbelievers against the truth of the gospel. As we will see later, Wesley allows that separation may sometimes be justifiable, but only as a last resort. He did not believe that he or his British Methodists had come to that point with the Church of England; but we saw him as early as the conference of 1744 contemplating the possibility that they might be ‘thrust out’—which is what he believed had happened with the sixteenth-century Reformers and the Catholic Church.”

Prof. Wainwright continues: “On the threshold of the twenty-first century, new divisions threaten [the Methodist communion], as indeed they do in the case of most mainstream Protestant churches in the Western world. The most obvious issues occur in the field of bioethics around sexuality and the beginning and ending of life. These are important enough matters in themselves, although they may also be presenting symptoms of a broader and deeper malaise involving the doctrines of creation and redemption, the status and interpretation of Scripture, and the nature and exercise of teaching authority in the church. Those of us who, as evangelicals and/or Catholics, wish to maintain the identity of historic Christianity will stay as long as we can in our ecclesial location—in order, as Wesley put it, to ‘leave the whole’...

“Those...who are concerned for the church’s faithfulness should as long as possible stay put for the sake of those among whom God has placed them—and they will do so relying on God’s mercy rather than their own righteousness, however real. Wesley does, however, envisage cases where it may become justifiable and even necessary to separate. Sometimes he seems to have in mind the case of separation from a local church, at other times from a national church, a denominational church or even an entire confessional communion.”

Prof. Wainwright moves on to quote Wesley on schism: “‘Suppose, for instance, you were a member of the Church of Rome, and you could not remain therein without committing idolatry; without worshiping of idols, whether images, or saints and angels; then it would be your bounden duty to leave that community,

totally to separate from it. Suppose you could not remain in the Church of England without doing something which the word of God forbids, or omitting something which the word of God positively commands; if this were the case (but blessed be God it is not), you ought to separate from the Church of England. I will make the case my own: I am now, and have been from my youth, a member and a minister of the Church of England: and I have no desire nor design to separate from it, till my soul separates from my body. Yet if I were not permitted to remain therein without omitting what God requires me to do, it would then become meet and right, and my bounden duty, to separate from it without delay. To be more particular: I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the Gospel; yea, and my own salvation depends upon preaching it: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." If then I could not remain in the church without omitting this, without desisting from preaching the Gospel, I should be under a necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul. In like manner, if I could not continue united to any smaller society, church, or body of Christians, without committing sin, without lying and hypocrisy, without preaching to others doctrines which I did not myself believe, I should be under an absolute necessity of separating from that society. And in all cases the sin of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation, by requiring of me such terms of communion as I could not in conscience comply with. But, setting aside this case, suppose the Church or society to which I am now united does not require me to do anything which the Scripture forbids, or to omit anything which the Scripture enjoins, it is then my indispensable duty to continue therein. And if I separate from it without any such necessity, I am justly chargeable (whether I foresaw them or not) with all the evils consequent upon that separation."

Prof. Wainwright summarizes Rev. Wesley on separation: "There, then, Wesley numbers three grounds for separation from a church: its imposition of acts that Scripture forbids or its omission of acts that Scripture commands; its denial of liberty to evangelize; and its requirements of false doctrine..."

Then the Prof. Wainwright concludes his chapter: "In bringing this study thus to a provisional conclusion, I am hinting that the issues currently agitating The United Methodist Church are by no means parochial. They are part of a profound challenge and opportunity that is confronting worldwide Christianity at the entrance to the third millennium. They concern, as always, the nature of the gospel, the content of the faith, the identity and location of the church, the pursuit of its mission, and the exercise of its discipline.

"Same-sex genital relationships, abortion and

euthanasia all raise profound questions of theological anthropology; to condone the practice of any of them would be to take the church down tracks it has hitherto closed off. To cease preaching, baptizing and praying in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit would be to change the character of the gospel story beyond recognition. To refrain from confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior of the world would be to renege on what the church has considered its dominical commission to make disciples of all nations. Where, geographically and culturally, the church holds fast to the Scriptures, interpreted according to the classic tradition, it appears that the Christian faith is

spreading. Revisionism seems to thrive only amid decline." (emphases added)

As the discussion of the "amicable separation" of The

United Methodist Church unfolds, here and there, Rev. Wesley's and Prof. Wainwright's wisdom should be read, remembered, and heeded. ♥

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

WAITING FOR RESPONSES

You should know that, months ago, the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries was invited by Lifewatch to offer reasons for its co-sponsorship of the April 25th March for Women's Lives. As of early November, no response has been received. Also, the person who made apparently false statements at the 2004 General Conference—to defend the continued affiliation of the General Board of Church and Society and the Women's Division/General Board of Global Ministries with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC)—has not responded to repeated Lifewatch invitations to defend her pro-RCRC claims. If and when these replies are received, they will be published, in complete form and as soon as possible, in Lifewatch. ♥

A LETTER TO A BISHOP

The following letter was sent from a congregation to a bishop. It reflects how one congregation and her pastor have recently worked through challenges related to baptismal covenant, denominational discipline, and life and abortion. Perhaps your congregation and/or your pastor will sense God's call to attempt something similar. If so, what follows might serve as a model letter for your effort. On the other hand, you might want to start a similar letter anew. Our Lord, methinks, would have us strive for congregational faithfulness to the Church's faith and life—all the while striving to write, serve, and speak the truth in love. —Editor

Bishop Alfred W. Gwinn, Jr.
The Raleigh Area of The United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 10955
Raleigh, NC 27605
01 November 2004

Dear Bp. Gwinn:

St. Peter's United Methodist Church [of Morehead City, NC] prays and hopes that your transition into The Raleigh Area's episcopal residence and office has been a smooth one for your family and you. Along with thousands of other United Methodists across our conference, we warmly welcome you to eastern North Carolina. The same honor and love that we had (and have) for Bp. Marion Edwards are now yours as well.

You should know that, in recent years, St. Peter's United Methodist Church has not paid her annual apportionments in full. For reasons of congregational conscience that have been annually communicated to our bishop, St. Peter's Church has withheld a percentage of apportioned monies and redirected that money to significant ministries throughout the Church universal.

However, we believe that we have entered a new era in American Methodism. This new era requires a new response from St. Peter's Church. The obvious disregard of The Book of Discipline found in The United Methodist Church's Western Jurisdiction—illustrated especially by the decision rendered in the church trial of Rev. Karen Dammann—has caused St. Peter's Church to reconsider her response to apportionments. We have clearly seen that ours is not a time to take covenant and discipline lightly. Therefore, over the past several months, our Administrative Council has studied and discussed our baptismal covenant and denominational discipline to discern what God requires of St. Peter's Church in this new era. What follows is a brief summary of our findings.

First, we considered the baptismal covenant. As "The Baptismal Covenant I" declares, "Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy [C]hurch. We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift, offered to us without price." (The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 33) So the baptismal covenant is the means by which we are not only graciously received into Christ's Church but also generally instructed how to live faithfully in the Church and in the world. Testing our readiness to enter, make, and keep the covenant, the Church requires us to "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness..." to "accept the freedom and power God gives [us] to resist evil..." to "confess Jesus Christ as [our] Savior...and promise to serve him as [our] Lord..." and to "remain faithful members of Christ's holy [C]hurch and serve as Christ's representatives in the world." (p. 34) In addition, the baptismal covenant includes: a declaration of the Church's faith as articulated by The Apostles' Creed; a promise to "be loyal to The United Methodist Church, and do all in [our] power to strengthen its ministries;" and a vow to "faithfully participate in [the congregation's] ministries

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND

THE ANNUAL LIFEWATCH SERVICE OF WORSHIP

Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker preaching
(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.

by [our] prayers, [our] presence, [our] gifts, and [our] service." (p. 34) In summary, the baptismal covenant—which is made possible only by God's justifying and sanctifying grace—securely binds us to Jesus Christ, to the Church catholic, to The United Methodist Church, and to a particular, United Methodist congregation.

And second, we reviewed The Book of Discipline to find congregational responsibilities. Constituted by the baptismal covenant, a congregation of The United Methodist Church is "subject to its Discipline." (Par. 203) A part of being subject to the church's Discipline is the payment of annual apportionments: "The apportionments for all apportioned general [c]hurch funds...shall not be subject to reduction...by the charge or local church." (Par. 811.5) Furthermore, the "[p]ayment in full of these apportionments [that is, the World Service Fund] by local churches...is the first benevolent responsibility of the [c]hurch." (Par. 812)

Therefore, our investigation concluded that: all United Methodist laity and clergy are charged to be obedient to the baptismal covenant; and all United Methodist congregations are subject to The Book of Discipline, and this includes the full payment of annual apportionments.

But in the course of life in the Church, the following questions are bound to arise. Is it possible that obedience to the baptismal covenant might, in a particular case, conflict with the congregation being subject to the Discipline? For example, might United Methodist leaders and/or general boards engage in activities blatantly opposed to the denomination's Discipline? Under such circumstances, are not United Methodists, out of obedience to the baptismal covenant, required to resist such activities? And as a last resort, after all other possible responses have been attempted to no avail, might a congregation, motivated by covenantal obedience, refuse to pay apportioned monies that would support continuing, undisciplined activities by denominational boards? So, might it be truthful to claim that lay and clerical faithfulness to the baptismal covenant can, in the event of denominational disobedience, override a congregation being subject to the Discipline?

The Administrative Council of St. Peter's United Methodist Church answers all the aforementioned questions with Yes. Our Yes's are not speculative and theoretical, for they are based on a particular case in point.

The Administrative Council of St. Peter's Church believes that the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) and the Women's Division/General Board of Global Ministries (WD/GBGM) have blatantly acted against the Discipline of The United Methodist Church. By co-sponsoring the March for Women's Lives on April 25, 2004 in Washington, DC, these two United Methodist institutions joined a pro-choice—actually, a pro-abortion—political rally that boldly contradicted our denomination's teaching on abortion (The Book of Discipline, Par. 161J), stained our denomination's name and witness in the public arena, and contributed to the further coarsening and demoralization of our general society. Out of obedience to the baptismal covenant, we are compelled to register with you our profoundest protest against GBCS and WD/GBGM for their participation in this pro-choice March.

Even so, for the time being, St. Peter's United Methodist Church will remain subject to our denomination's Discipline. Therefore, St. Peter's Church will strive to pay our 2005 apportionments in full. At the same time, St. Peter's Church encourages you, as our bishop, to do all you can, whenever you can, to address this egregious violation of the church's Discipline in the Council of Bishops and in other appropriate venues.

You are the bishop of our conference and our congregation. You have been sent to us by the Lord of

the Church to lead and oversee not only the North Carolina Conference and St. Peter's United Methodist Church, but also the larger denomination. Therefore, we stand ready, willing, and able to support you, in your episcopal ministry, in whatever ways you may deem best.

As St. Peter's United Methodist Church seeks to be obedient to the baptismal covenant and subject to the church's Discipline, we humbly ask you to do the same. We urge you to challenge The United Methodist Church—including the Council of Bishops, the General Board of Church and Society, and the Women's Division/General Board of Global Ministries—to become increasingly faithful to the covenant and Discipline by which all United Methodists are bound.

May God's grace and peace continue with you.

In Christ,
(Mr.) Patrick Mann, Chair of the Committee on Finance
(Mr.) Larry H. Miller, Chair of the Administrative Council
(The Rev.) Paul T. Stallsworth, Pastor ♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

• United Methodist bishops, when they have addressed the matter of life and abortion, have routinely advanced the pro-choice position. That is about to change. On January 24th, Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker of the Florida Area will stand and deliver a very thoughtful sermon on the Gospel and abortion at the 2005 Lifewatch Service of Worship. This will be an historic event in contemporary American

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; and ⑤ THE JERICHO PLAN: Breaking Down the Walls Which Prevent Post-Abortion Healing

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); ___ copies of Holy Abortion? (\$8.00/copy); and ___ copies of The Jericho Plan (\$8/copy). These prices include shipping/handling.

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Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Please enclose your check, payable to "Lifewatch," and mail to: Lifewatch/1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043.

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Extend your outreach—and ours—with a free subscription to a friend. Simply provide the information requested below. Also, your contributions—however large or small—will help advance the ministry of Lifewatch by inspiring United Methodists to love both unborn child and mother. Thank you for caring enough to act.

Name: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Please mail to: Lifewatch/1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043.

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Lifewatch
Taskforce of
United Methodists on
Abortion and Sexuality

1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043

- * Wesley and Wainwright on schism
- * A word from the World Methodist Council
- * Lifewatch Worship Service on January 24, 2005

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Methodism: Bp. Whitaker will become the first United Methodist bishop to offer a sermon on abortion that is consistent with historic Christianity's moral teaching on the matter. Look forward to reading Bp. Whitaker's sermon in the March 2005 issue of Lifewatch. Better yet, make every effort to attend the 2005 Lifewatch Service of Worship on January 24th in Washington, DC. (For more details, please see the boxed announcement in this newsletter.) We hope to see you then and there!

- You will notice that our books-to-order coupon includes a new title. The Jericho Plan: Breaking Down the Walls Which Prevent Post-Abortion Healing (Acorn Books, Springfield, IL, 1996), by David C. Reardon, is a wonderful resource for ministry. Though written especially for clergy, this brief book can also be of great assistance to laity. The back cover rightly claims: "In this book, you will learn why the women and men who are experiencing unresolved grief over a past abortion feel trapped. They feel unable to express their pain or to seek the comfort of loved ones. On the one hand, they fear that those who are pro-life will condemn and reject them. On the other hand, they fear that those who are pro-choice will deny their need to grieve and reject the reality of their pain...[T]his book will teach you how to break through these and many other obstacles which prevent post-abortion healing. You will find in this book comfort and direction for your church, your loved ones, and, perhaps, even for yourself...It provides background information on post-abortion issues, compelling testimonies, sample sermons, and an extensive directory of resources." As you can tell, The Jericho Plan will help The United Methodist Church to be faithful to its newest Social Principle on abortion, which encourages post-abortion ministry. Please use the coupon and order your copy of The Jericho Plan, for \$8.00, as soon as possible.

- Father Frank Pavone directs Priests for Life in the Roman Catholic Church. He is also the current president

of the National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC), to which Lifewatch belongs. As might be surmised from these positions, he is one of the great servants of the Gospel of Life in our time. Fr. Pavone recently mentioned that, while in school, he had a steady Wesleyan influence on his life. A poster on his dorm-room wall proclaimed, "All the World Is My Parish." Considering Fr. Pavone's current ministry, one must conclude that this Wesleyan message had quite an impact on this faithful priest who daily offers the Gospel of Life to the world.

- "A child is God's greatest gift to the family, to the nation, to the world. The child is a life from God, created in the image of God, created for great things, to love and to be loved." —Mother Teresa
- "Give us courage, O Lord, to stand up and be counted, to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, to stand up for ourselves when it is needful for us to do so. Let us fear nothing more than we fear Thee. Let us love nothing more than we love Thee, for thus we shall fear nothing also. Amen." —Alan Paton (1903-1988) [For All the Saints: A Prayer Book for and by the Church, Volume II, p. 410] ♥

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."