

THE NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Lifewatch (03/01/08) will contain the text of the 2008 Lifewatch Sermon by Bishop William H. Willimon of The Birmingham Area. The same issue will include “Doctrine, Dissent, and Defense: The United Methodist Church’s Social Principle on Abortion (161J).” In that three-part article, Paragraph 161J will be critiqued by the editor of Lifewatch and defended by Mr. Jim Winkler (General Secretary) and Ms. Linda Bales (Director of Public Witness and Advocacy) of United Methodism’s General Board of Church and Society.
—Paul T. Stallsworth

STOP THE LYING— WE ARE DYING!

Part of the following message was delivered at the January 22, 2007 March for Life in Washington, DC.

My friends and fellow Americans, I am the seventh child of twelve children born to Frank and Consoella Robinson; and I am so glad to be here today. I am glad because my parents did not abort me. I am thankful that they chose not to kill me as a baby. You see—when I was born, they already had six children, and times were hard—so those could have been reasons to terminate or end my life. I am thankful to God for my life and to my parents for not killing me. To God be the glory!

I thank God for all these African Americans who are standing here with me. They already know the truth that abortion is a killer.

WHAT IF?

Last Monday, seven days ago, we celebrated the life of a truly great American, and a marvelous and gifted citizen of the world—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was a tremendous gift of God to our country and to the world. He stood for justice, and he stood for truth. He was a powerful preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was an outstanding witness to the Christian faith—that God is life, and God is love.

He stood up in a time when racial tension was destroying this country. He stood for peace and

justice. Non-violence was his method of achieving freedom from oppression. He gave us all hope for a new day and a better day.

Can you imagine what it would have been like if there had been no Martin Luther King, Jr., during those turbulent times in this country, when they were killing, lynching, and discriminating against African Americans at will? Dr. King kept us together even when they bombed and killed the three girls in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963.

Suppose his parents had decided to abort and kill him as a baby. Suppose they had chosen the partial-birth method of abortion. Then the abortionist would have turned him around and pulled him down the birth canal. They would have pulled his feet out first leaving his head inside of his mother’s body. They would have stabbed him in the back of his head. They then would have taken a vacuum and sucked his brains out. His head would have collapsed, and his lifeless little body would have been pulled out dead. Abortion is cruel and inhumane. Animal rights folks would not stand, for one moment, for an animal being treated like that. If Martin Luther King, Jr. had been aborted, the world would have lost a great deliverer, and a great fighter for justice and liberty.

Well, my friends, I know it sounds horrible. But abortion is horrible! It is a bloody and murderous business. And it is a very lucrative business. The abortionist makes out very well. Every day in this country about 4,000 children die, by partial-birth abortion or some other ungodly and cruel method of death, at the hands of well paid abortionists.

ABORTION A NON-ISSUE?

In the African-American community, the statistics are horrifying. It seems like no one cares—not even some of our prominent, African-American leaders. I believe several of these prominent ones—Reverend Jessie Jackson, Reverend Joseph Lowery, and Reverend Al Sharpton—got together in Dallas, Texas last year in 2006 and declared that, as it relates to the African-American community, abortion is a non-issue. My question is: How can it be?

How can abortion be a non-issue to African Americans when last year alone nearly 500,000

African-American babies died at the hands of abortionists? How can it be a non-issue when we have in our communities organizations, like Planned Parenthood, that counsel our folks to destroy and kill their young for the promise of a better life? Yet they fail to tell them that they may never sleep with peace again, for they may constantly hear the screaming and the crying of the aborted baby. They are never told that they might suffer chronic depression and become suicidal. They will not even be told that their risk of developing breast cancer is four times greater after an abortion. (Washington, DC, by the way, led the nation with the highest breast cancer rate in 2004. It is to be noted that Washington, for the moment, is a predominantly African-American city.)

How can abortion be a non-issue, when we make up only 12% of the total population, yet 34% of all abortions involve blacks? How can it be a non-issue if the total number of aborted black babies last year nearly equaled the population of Washington, DC, which is about 506,000? How can it be a non-issue when yesterday about 1,400 black babies died; today another 1,400 will die; and yet tomorrow it will be repeated? How can it be a non-issue when it is a moral and spiritual issue? Someone is lying, while we are dying!

WHERE IS THE OUTRAGE?

Let me bring it to you another way. What do you suppose the reaction would be if five African-American babies were killed in their mother's womb by the Ku Klux Klan? You are right, there would be outrage! All kinds of voices would be screaming. But where is the outcry, where is the outrage, over abortion? Not five babies were killed in their mother's womb. Not 50. Not 500. Not 5,000. Not 50,000. But 500,000—that is, one-half million—African-American children died, and our leaders say it is a non-issue. Someone is lying, while we are dying!

Where is the voice of prominent, African-American leaders? Where is the voice of the NAACP? Where is the voice of the Congressional Black Caucus? But worse than all this shame: Where is the voice of the African-American pulpit? Where is the black preacher? Have they all been bought out and silenced by a billion-dollar, abortion industry?

African Americans, we must come on board and fight for life. For they are lying, and we are dying! There is a genocide in the African-American community, and it must stop now. We must get the word out that we are dying, and they are lying. Abortion is a big-time killer!

Abortion is not a non-issue. It is a major issue in our community. Nothing has killed more blacks than

abortion. Of the 17,000,000—17 million!—blacks killed by abortion since 1973, how many Martin Luther King, Jr.'s have been destroyed? In the period 1973-2003, it is reported that, of all major causes of death in black America, abortion is the number one killer. When black deaths from HIV/AIDS, stroke, cancer, heart attack, accidents, homicide, etc. are added up across this thirty-year period, they total 4,800,000. In this same thirty-year period, abortion by itself accounts for 13,000,000 African-American deaths. If it was not for abortion, we would still be the largest minority in this country.

We are dying, and they are lying!

At all of the 47,000,000 abortions of American children over the last 34 years—at abortion clinics, abortion mills, hospitals, or wherever the babies have been destroyed—the fingerprints left behind have been those of satan and never of Jesus. Satan is a liar, a murderer, and a destroyer from the beginning. He has successfully

hardened the hearts of humans to kill, without remorse, their own children. He has blinded their minds and thus their eyes, so that they cannot see the horror of their sin. They call it choice, but murder by any name is still death.

Abortion is evil. It is wicked. It is cruel. It is inhumane. It is ungodly. And it is genocidal in the African-American community.

They are lying, while we are dying!

Let all people and all nations get on board and stop this slaughter of innocent human life by abortion! Let us move with dispatch to heal and restore that which the devil has destroyed by lying!

“Then said Jesus unto them again, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.’” (John 10:7-14, KJV)

We are dying! They are lying!

My friends, choose life. It is far better!

—Pastor Luke J. Robinson/Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church/ P.O. Box 3311/106 East Third Street/Frederick, MD 21705/(301)-663-9540 ♥

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A CONGREGATION'S LETTER TO ITS BISHOP

Another season of charge conferences, across The United Methodist Church in the United States, is nearing its end. At their 2007 charge conferences, United Methodist congregations will have declared their intended responses to their 2008 denominational apportionments, which fund the ministries of the larger church.

Responding to the challenge posed by denominational apportionments, your congregation's leadership might also consider writing a letter to your bishop. An example of one such letter, which need not be taken as a model, follows. It was written, edited, approved, signed, and sent by the lay and pastoral leadership of St. Peter's United Methodist Church of Morehead City, NC.—Paul T. Stallsworth

Bishop Alfred W. Gwinn, Jr
The Raleigh Area of The United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 10955
Raleigh, NC 27605
10 November 2006
Dear Bishop Gwinn:

Late Pentecost grace and peace to you.

First of all, St. Peter's United Methodist Church would like to commend you for your teaching at last summer's 2006 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference. Some of your introductory statements, in the State of the Church Address, were especially strong...

For your information, the 2006 Charge Conference of St. Peter's United Methodist Church took place on October 11. Then and there, St. Peter's Church accepted in full its 2007 apportionments. Because of obedience to Jesus Christ and to His Body the Church—which is made concrete in obedience to the baptismal covenant and to the Discipline of The United Methodist Church—St. Peter's Church affirmed this connectional responsibility and challenge.

The commitment of St. Peter's Church—to Jesus Christ, to His Church catholic, to The United Methodist Church, and to mission and ministry in Morehead City and beyond—means that we have concerns about contemporary United Methodism. We are especially concerned about the leadership of the Council of Bishops.

In early October, our congregation sponsored a lecture by Dr. Richard B. Hays, the George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School. According to Dr. Hays, who spoke "On Biblical Authority," Biblical authority is not just a trump-like power that individuals assign to Scripture. Rather, Biblical authority becomes real only when it is practiced. Furthermore, Biblical authority is practiced when: the Bible is faithfully and truthfully taught, by a teacher, to a generally

receptive group/congregation/ denomination. When and only when this happens, Biblical authority is realized in the Church.

But notice: for Biblical authority to be practiced and realized, there must be a teacher or a teaching agent. If there is no teacher or no faithful teaching, there is no Biblical authority. (Likewise, if a receptive group/congregation/denomination is lacking, Biblical authority does not happen.) Unfortunately, in The United Methodist Church and with regard to the challenge presented by those who would legitimate homosexual conduct, there is presently no active teaching body.

(Yes, many of us United Methodists are quite weary of discussing the issue of homosexual activity. However, as Martin Luther declared: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except that little point which the world...[is] at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point." Likewise, the Church gets to choose neither the issues over which the battles will rage nor whether or not she will enter the battles.)

In response, one could claim that the Council of Bishops did write a unanimously approved Pastoral Letter (dated November 5, 2005), on homosexuality and the church, to the denomination. However, this statement by the Council required so much explanation and interpretation that one would be forgiven for thinking it neither clear nor helpful. Certain of its statements—particularly "While pastors have the responsibility to discern readiness for membership, homosexuality is not a barrier."—caused more than a little discussion, debate, and argument throughout the denomination.

So, here and now, what is required? We would humbly submit to you that the Council of Bishops should teach the Church's faith, on homosexual conduct and other matters (especially abortion), to The United Methodist Church. This should be done to defend the Church and the Church's faith—not just for the practical-political reason of putting out fires of controversy wherever they might burn throughout the denomination. A model of such teaching might well be "The Church and Homosexuality" and "The Coming Debate over Membership" (www.flumc2.org) by Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker of the Florida Area. If the Council of Bishops does not teach the Church's faith on homosexual activity or abortion or any other matter, Biblical authority simply will not be realized in our denomination; and the low-grade confusion in the denomination caused by conflict over the matter of homosexual conduct will extend into, and intensify in, the future.

At the present time, several developments seem to distract the Council of Bishops from its charge to

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

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

teach the Church's faith. (For a statement of this charge, see Paragraphs 427.2 and 427.3, The Book of Discipline [2004]). First, there is leadership literature. While literature on leadership can be helpful to the leaders of the Church, it should never become a substitute for the teaching of the Church's faith. Second, there is prayer. While prayer is absolutely essential to being the Church, it does not make faithful and truthful teaching of the faith unnecessary. Third, there is peace and quiet in the denomination. While short seasons of peace and quiet in the Church's life are to be welcomed, the defense of the apostolic faith has made life in the Church, through the ages, much more stormy than many United Methodists realize. Vigorous contention for the faith is the norm throughout the history of the Church, because such contention is mandated by the Church's Book (Jude 3).

As our Administrative Council voted a couple of years ago, St. Peter's Church will "pay [apportionments] in full and protest [concerns] in public." Next year, 2007, will mark the third year of paying in full and protesting in public. By paying and protesting, we are attempting to respond to the call and command of our Lord Jesus Christ, to our promises made in the baptismal covenant, and to our vows of faithfulness and loyalty to the Church catholic and to The United Methodist Church.

At the same time, we ask you, as our bishop and as one bound by covenant obedience, to do all that you can, whenever you can, however you can, to encourage the Council of Bishops to teach the Church's faith—even when such teaching involves serious disagreements among members of the Council. So, be of good courage, and be faithful in all things.

Your response to the above...concerns will be most appreciated.

In Christ,

(Mr.) Patrick Mann, Chair, Committee on Finance
(Mr.) Larry H. Miller, Chair, Administrative Council
(Ms.) Brenda Roberts, Treasurer
(Mr.) Jay Smith, Lay Leader
(The Rev.) Paul T. Stallsworth, Pastor

P.S. Last night the Administrative Council of St. Peter's United Methodist Church unanimously approved this letter and its distribution.

CC: Dr. R. Randy Day, General Secretary/General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church/475 Riverside Drive/New York, NY 10115

Dr. Maxie Dunnam/The Confessing Movement within The United Methodist Church/7995 East 21st Street/Indianapolis, IN 46219

The Reverend James V. Heidinger II, Publisher/Good News/308 East Main Street/Wilmore, KY 40390

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, President/Council of Bishops/The United Methodist Church/ c/o5215 Main Street/Houston, TX 77002

The Reverend D. Douglas Jessee/New Bern District of The United Methodist Church/1329 South Glenburnie Road/New Bern, NC 28560

Dr. Stephen Love/Women's Division/General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church/475 Riverside Drive/New York, NY 10115

Mr. Allen O. Morris/Concerned Methodists/P.O. Box 2864/Fayetteville, NC 28302

Ms. Yonat Shimron/The Raleigh News & Observer/215 South McDowell Street/Raleigh, NC 27601

Mrs. Faye Short/RENEW Network/P.O. Box 889/Cornelia, GA 30531

Mr. Stephen Swecker/The Progressive Christian/Box 458/North Berwick, ME 03906

Mr. Mark Tooley/UMAction c/o IRD/1023 15th Street, NW—Suite 601/Washington, DC 20005

Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker/The Florida Area of The United Methodist Church/1122 E. McDonald Street/Lakeland, FL 33801

Bishop William H. Willimon/The Birmingham Area of The United Methodist Church/898 Arkadelphia Road/Birmingham, AL 35204-5011

Mr. James Winkler, General Secretary/General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church/100 Maryland Avenue, NE/Washington, DC 20002♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

●Your personal contributions to the ministry of Lifewatch are absolutely essential. General Conference 2008, which begins on April 23 and ends on May 2, poses many challenges to which Lifewatch will respond. In the run up to General Conference, the usual bills arrive every month. Therefore, only with your help can Lifewatch accomplish what we are called to do—that is, witness to the Gospel of Life at the 2008 General Conference 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. As always, our heartfelt gratitude goes out to you for your generous support.

●Lifewatch, as you know, is a member of the National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC). NPRC meets four times a year, usually at the headquarters of the National Right to Life Committee, which is located in Washington, DC. The street address of National Right to Life is 512 10th Street, NW. As you might recall

from American history, that address is in an historically significant neighborhood. At Ford's Theater (511 10th Street, NW) President Abraham Lincoln was shot on the night of April 14, 1865, and at the house across the street (the Petersen House at 516 10th Street, NW), he died the next morning.

Why bring up these historical curiosities?

Because during the middle of the 19th century, the United States and its churches were engaged in a struggle, that ended in the violence of the Civil War, over the meaning of freedom and slavery. Just over 100 years later, the United States and its churches began a struggle over the meaning of freedom and abortion. It should be said that the first struggle was engaged, and the second struggle now is engaged, to advance the cause of the dignity of the human person.

Interesting that both of these struggles have historical sites that are located so close to each other in Washington, D.C. Perhaps this a reminder of God's providence and judgment, in and over the currents of American history, past and present.

● We were very pleased that the Kansas State University Libraries recently added to their collection: The Church and Abortion: In Search of New Ground for Response (Abingdon, 1993), The Right Choice: Pro-Life Sermons from... (Abingdon, 1997), and Thinking Theologically about Abortion (Bristol House, 2000). Have you ever considered donating a set of these books, available from Lifewatch, to your university, college, seminary, community, or church library? We trust that your consideration will lead to action.

● Dr. F. Thomas Trotter is a former general secretary of United Methodism's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Commenting on the current state of The United Methodist Church, he states: "In our fascination with our internal organs [i.e., denominational structures and procedures], we [United Methodists] have found ourselves unable to speak with clarity and directness to the conscience of our people and of the world. We have left the public discourse on urgent moral issues to various kinds of idolaters—the exploiters, the dominionists, the neo-conservatives, and the bland and careless assumption of political leaders that religion is private and unrelated to any meaningful issue of public life.

"We have so organized ourselves that it is almost impossible for us to take strong moral positions on issues, much less [take] action. Our responsibility for maintaining the institution has overwhelmed our conviction that the institution has work to do. Who is assuming national leadership in behalf of our people? Who is calling for change in a policy of American military imperialism? Where is the prophetic voice of The United Methodist Church that should echo the voices of McConnell, Oxnam, Crane, Baker, Bosley, and Muelder of an earlier time? It is ironic that a 'table' is a metaphor now for denominational decision-making rather than a 'pulpit.'" (Circuit Rider, October 2007, p. 23, emphases added)

While he can be forgiven for assuming that true prophets will usually be lined up left of political center, Dr. Trotter makes an accurate and powerful statement. Forty-seven million abortions in American society since 1973, and what does The United

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; ④ HOLY ABORTION? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice; ⑤ THE JERICHO PLAN: Breaking Down the Walls Which Prevent Post-Abortion Healing; and ⑥ 30 DAYS FOR LIFE: A Prayer Devotional

I wish to order: ___ copies of The Right Choice (\$12.00/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); ___ copies of The Jericho Plan (\$8.00/copy); and ___ copies of 30 Days for Life (\$2.00/copy). Price includes shipping.

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Abortion and Sexuality

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12/01/07

* General Conference—an appeal

* Lying and dying

* A congregation's letter to its bishop

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Methodist Church have to say? Paragraph 161J in The Book of Discipline (2004). That is not enough.

● Dr. Jerome Lejeune (1926-1994), through his writings and life story, maintains a faithful witness to the Gospel of Life. “In 1991, Jerome embarked on ‘reflections on professional ethics in medicine,’ in seven points: ‘1. “Christians, be not afraid!” It is you who possess the truth; not that you invented it, but you are the vehicle for it. To all doctors you must repeat: you must conquer the illness, not attack the patient. 2. Man is made in the image of God. For this reason alone he must be respected... 3. “Abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes” (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, 51). 4. Objective morality exists; it is clear, and it is universal... 5. The child is not disposable and marriage is indissoluble. 6. “You shall honor your father and mother:” uniparental reproduction by means of cloning or homosexuality is not possible. 7. The human genome, the genetic capital of our race, is not disposable.’ Note this courageous phrase: ‘In so-called pluralistic societies, they shove it down our throats:

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.”

“You Christians don’t have the right to impose your morality on others!” Well! I tell you, not only do you have the right to try to incorporate your morality in the law, but it’s your democratic duty!” (from the Holy Name of Mary [09/12/07] letter published by Saint Joseph Abbey, www.clairval.com) Amen.

● Many United Methodists, some of whom are a part of the Lifewatch community, belong to active “armies of compassion” around the world that President Bush recently thanked (Lifewatch, 09/01/07). This editor would like to reinforce this thanks.

May you, motivated by God’s grace, guided by God’s Word, and empowered by God’s Spirit, continue to defend the dignity of each and every human life—whatever the age (embryo to elder), whatever the health (vital to ill to dying), whatever the degree of strength (weak to strong), whatever the level of intelligence (slow to bright), whatever the ability to speak (mute to articulate). Surely, that is the first ministry of love.♥

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(1908-1989)