

EMILY CRIKELAIR UPDATE

Emily Crikelair, you will remember from the previous issue of Lifewatch, is the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Paul Crikelair. Paul and Janet have supported the ministry of Lifewatch since the late 1980s. Last June, Emily was literally struck by lightning. Since then, because of the grace of God, she has been recovering very slowly but very surely.

In October, Emily was moved to her home in Stroudsburg, PA. Her family, led by Janet and Paul, surrounds her with love, cares for her, encourages her, and works with her. Therapists of various kinds are using their expertise to help Emily continue to progress in regaining her physical, mental, and verbal abilities.

Please continue to keep Emily, Paul, Janet, and the entire family in your prayers. The challenges they face are great. But greater still is the love of God at work in their lives.

—Paul T. Stallsworth

TRUTH

by Blake Adams

"See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8, RSV)

Have you ever been lied to? Furthermore, have you yourself ever lied? Sadly, both are inevitable. Whenever you tell a lie, there is relief, even ecstasy, at having successfully misdirected the issue from yourself. In fact, you convince yourself it was not a lie, but a clever riddle, a trick, or a game. (Mankind is such a genius at deception.) But over time, the truth begins to weigh down the heart. Your grasp on reality weakens, and guilt blocks out logical and moral systems, until finally the lie must be believed, even by you, or else you lose the "game."

In the year 1973, through Roe v. Wade, abortion was legalized in America. This U.S. Supreme Court decision effectively assured the annihilation of unborn American children and jeopardized the safety of the mothers bearing them. By the time you finish reading this speech, at least 21 children will die from

abortion in America alone. But the issue of abortion did not begin with Roe v. Wade, but long ago, when the truth of life was trivialized.

The trivialization of the truth of life was personified from 1650 until the early 1800s, a period that history recognizes as the Age of Reason. It was then that these trivializations, actually lies, took the form of philosophies: Romanticism, Realism, Materialism, Deism, Naturalism, Existentialism, and Impressionism, to name a few. Each had its own day in the sun. It seemed a new philosopher, with a new philosophy, took the stand every day and declared he had discovered the truth, the very meaning of life. All of the "isms" were cataloged and labeled, each with their differences and flaws, some complicated and others simple. The Age of Reason came to a close in the early 1800s, and it left in its wake a mixed-up humanity, confused and tired of debating the truths and non-truths of all philosophies. All that remained was numbness.

This numbness is the philosophy that rules today, and it is called Post-Modernism. It is a philosophy that contends: "What you think and what you believe is no better, and no worse, than what I think and what I believe. Therefore, who is right? Who is wrong? There is no such thing as truth. The only possible way to know something is wrong, or not, is if it hurts or if it is illegal." Because mankind has bought into the ideas of Post-Modernism, people with no moral compass of their own must default to the decisions of the powers that be. Is this the right way? Is this the American way? Of course not, but it is the prevalent way!

So, what is truth? Go back in time to a century when the suggestion of a mother choosing to harm her unborn child would have been an unnatural, unthinkable idea. In Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary, the definition of truth is "conformity to fact or reality; exact accordance with that which is, or has been, or shall be." Move forward to the modern American Heritage Dictionary, in which truth is defined as "a statement proven to be accepted as true." Say again? "[A]ccepted as true?" The difference between these two meanings is subtle, but deadly. The 1828 definition is strict, specific, exact, to-the-point, and perhaps even absolute. The modern definition implies that truth is only true as long as people accept it as true.

*“Truth is like a whisper.
You only hear it when you listen.”*

Ladies and gentlemen, abortion is but a branch from the Post-Modernist root. Post-Modernists cannot say that an unborn child is, or is not, a person; because, to them, all is relative. The unborn may be a human to you, but not to me. Murder is wrong, abortion is wrong, except in the case of rape. Lie! A beautifully constructed lie! Truth has no exception. Truth has no relation. Truth is its own, and it is absolute.

But return to the question: what is truth? The truth is that an unborn baby is a person and, therefore, sacred. Science proves it. History proves it. Theology, philosophy, nature itself, and human experience prove it. The truth was always clear, but when was it first twisted? Not in 1973. Legalized abortion did not happen overnight. It took time. It began with a subtle, whispered lie couched in the philosophies of the day. It festered in the halls of justice and endless debates over slavery. It grew in strength in the propaganda of Nazi Germany. It screamed from the rooftops, as Margaret Sanger and Planned Parenthood perfected their ideology of a master race. It proliferated in the moral decay of the turbulent 1960s, where personal responsibility was abandoned with the modernization of birth control. Today, the fruit of this little, whispered lie is a small, lifeless child. She is so tiny you can hold her in one hand. Her limbs have been barbarically torn from her body by hand, or her skin has been burned beyond recognition by a saline injection, or the base of her skull has been punctured with a surgeon's knife. Her mother? She will never be the same again.

Can we stop the death cycle? Can we legislate a human rights amendment? Maybe, but it is going to take time. One day, I hope to have a child, and I will tell him, just as my parents have told me, that he was wonderfully and fearfully made in the image of God. Truth is like a whisper. You only hear it when you listen. But it must be said. It will grow louder in the halls of justice, as we legally take on the abortion mills. It will be nurtured, as people are accepted, “not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.) It will proliferate, as we recognize the value of children in our own families and claim personal responsibility for the same. And perhaps, in time, we will win the abortionists and liberals, one at a time, day after day, and show them, by our love and by our actions, that life is sacred and that truth is absolute.

Blake Adams delivered a version of this award-winning speech at the 2008 National Right to Life Convention in Arlington, VA on July 5th. He is a high school student and lives in Powder Springs, GA.♥

OUR FATHER

by Rev. Stuart Tucker

What exactly do we mean when we pray, “Our Father?” Jesus taught His disciples to pray in the second person plural. Give us our daily bread. Forgive us our sins. Save us from the time of trial. But what does the “Our” in “Our Father” mean? Who is included in the circle of God’s love, care, and forgiveness?

The movie “Juno” is about a teenage girl who becomes pregnant. Her immediate response is to seek an abortion. But this plan is derailed when she learns that her unborn child, even at a very early stage, already has fingernails. Suddenly, whenever she looks at a person, all she can see are his or her nails. This changes everything. She cannot think of her unborn child as an “it” anymore. This one, simple, anatomical feature is enough for Juno to recognize the humanity of the child she carries.

What does Juno’s decision imply? Does the little one become human once Juno decides the little one is human? Does a sixteen-year-old really have such god-like power? Or is it the case that that little one is human all along, and it just takes a while for Juno to recognize the fact?

In Christian terms, when do we become part of the “Our” in “Our Father?” Are we entitled to be included in God’s love and care only when our mothers decide to keep us, or is this the gift of a gracious and loving God?

Juno has an insight when she recognizes the common humanity between herself and her unborn child. The Lord’s Prayer has the potential to open our eyes to the common brotherhood and sisterhood we share with all those who are children of the heavenly Father.

There is a rabbinic story in which there is a debate over the question, “When has the darkness turned to light?” A number of proposals are offered. One is that darkness has turned to light when you can tell a red thread from a blue thread. The final and true proposal is this: “The darkness has turned to light when you can recognize the face of your brother or sister.”

Perhaps that is why we pray the Lord’s Prayer each Sunday. We need to pray it until we get it right, until the darkness which prevents us from recognizing our brother and sister is dispelled by the light of this model of all prayers. In its first two words, the Lord’s Prayer declares that all of us are God’s children.

—Rev. Tucker is an assistant pastor at Carter Memorial United Methodist Church in Needham, MA. He can be contacted at <s2tucker@comcast.net>. ♥

**Please remember to pray and fast
for the ministry of Lifewatch the first Tuesday
of every month.**

OUR BISHOPS THEN, OUR BISHOPS NOW

History is fascinating. The history of anything and everything contains twists and turns, surprises and summits and surrenders. Take, for example, the history of Methodist bishops in the midst of the culture wars of the 19th century America.

It is no secret that Lifewatch maintains a special interest in the bishops of The United Methodist Church today. After all, they make history. According to The Book of Discipline, the bishops of United Methodism are consecrated to be, among other things, the leading teachers of the church. In season and out, with regard to controversial issues and non-controversial matters, the bishops are charged to teach Christian truth in Christian love to the Christian community.

This summer, while paying a visit to our congregation's very able congregational historian, this pastor was loaned a copy of Set Apart to Serve: The Meaning and Role of Episcopacy in the Wesleyan Tradition (Abingdon, 1985) by Bishop James K. Mathews. Bp. Mathews was elected to episcopal office in 1960 and became one of Methodism's most active episcopal players in the public square.

Given a special interest in Methodist bishops and given Bp. Mathews' episcopal ministry in public life, this pastor could not resist turning to the section in Set Apart to Serve that concerns the Methodist bishops during the years just before the Civil War. During that time, it will be remembered, the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States divided into the Methodist Episcopal Church (of the North) and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The historical details of this schism, according to Bp. Mathews' account, were most interesting, and they might help us to understand the Council of Bishops, and many of the bishops, of our time.

Bp. Mathews writes: "The events related to the General Conference of 1844 [at which the Methodist Episcopal Church divided] did not result so much in a schism from but a schism of episcopal Methodism, a division that was to last for nearly one hundred years. This manifestly did not take place in isolation from the divisive trends developing rapidly in the nation. The fact is that the straining and snapping of churchly bonds, North and South, were a prelude to the tragic political and military battles that were to follow. Bishop Nolan B. Harmon states that 'in the debates of 1844 the historian can hear the guns of Gettysburg.'" (p. 164, emphases in the original)

BEFORE 1844

According to Bp. Mathews, prior to 1844, the church and the church's bishops were timid about addressing slavery in America: "The General Conferences that followed 1828 not only did not

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

Preaching: Dr. Amy Laura Hall
The Divinity School—Duke University
and the

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

both on January 22, 2009 (Thursday)
at The United Methodist Building
100 Maryland Avenue, NE, Washington, DC

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

respond adequately to polity pressures from within the constituency but also failed to take very decisive action on the contemporary social issues, notably slavery. John Emory pointed out that in the 1798 Discipline, Bishops Coke and Asbury did not comment on the Section on Slavery. The reasons usually offered for this failure had to do with preserving the unity of Methodism, not notably successful." (p. 164)

Intent on maintaining church unity, the bishops were committed to a mix of institutional advancement and missionary activity: "Yet the denomination put great weight on success in church growth and in pursuing its mission of spreading scriptural holiness. Its judgments were often based on the pragmatic, not to say the expedient, and not always on high principle. It was also anxious to maintain a sectional balance in its leadership. From an initially strong position with respect to opposition to slavery, its witness in this respect gradually became mostly a spent force, its position more and more lethargic in pursuit of the exceeding sinfulness of slavery. We have seen some of the erosion of membership that resulted; at times the church even found itself defending slavery.

"The matter [of slavery] was, however, in one way or another on the agenda of each successive General Conference. From reading the record of the General Conferences, one gains the impression that there was a reluctance to deal firmly with the issue; the hope was that the problem would 'go away,' as one might say nowadays." (p. 165)

THE SCHISM OF 1844

Then came the infamous General Conference of 1844: "The 1844 General Conference meeting in New York City was the longest such conference[,] and presumably the most momentous[,] ever held. Its story has been told many times and will not be retold extensively here. The delegates were strong and able, representative of all sections of the country and of the issues involved; few extremists were present. Efforts

have been made to declare that the issue in 1844 was not slavery and, if it were, that this was a political, civic, and economic problem[,] not a moral one. Rather, it is asserted that the issue at stake was a constitutional one: the authority of bishops versus the power of the General Conference. The weight must surely come down on the side of [slavery] being the divisive issue. Both the issues were present; both—whether slavery or constitutionality—involved the episcopacy. Each aspect played into the other and precipitated a crisis. The bonds of unity could no longer stand the strains of a double stress.” (p. 166)

The bishops at the conference, it is sad to report, played a part in trying to deny slavery’s importance. After all, “[t]he Episcopal Address delivered by Bishop Soule did not deal with slavery but with polity.” (p. 166) Yet at the center of the storm was Bishop James O. Andrew, who “was involuntarily a slaveholder through marriage and lived in the state of Georgia where slaves could not be freed.” (p. 167)

Bp. Mathews continues to outline the unfortunate history of General Conference 1844: “On May 30, 1844, a last-ditch effort at reconciliation had been made by the bishops (all except Andrew himself) to recommend that the matter be carried over until the ensuing General Conference, with Andrew to be assigned meanwhile to conferences where his leadership was acceptable. Bishop Hedding, however, broke ranks and reversed his initial agreement to this solution. This measure[,] which was narrowly defeated[,] might have prevailed if Hedding had not withdrawn support. This was the crisis point of the conference.” (pp. 167-168)

On June 1, the decisive vote, on the Finley resolution, occurred. It passed 110-68. Adopted by a sectional vote, the Finley resolution read, in part: “Resolved, That it is the sense of this General Conference that he [Bp. Andrew] desist from the exercise of this office so long as this impediment [slaveholding] remains.” (p. 167)

Bishop Mathews reflects on the events of 1844: “[E]ven if the unity of the church could have been saved by some measure devised at the center, disunity and defection would have been inevitable back home regardless of geographical section. To force Andrew’s resignation would have provoked secession by the Southern conferences; to fail to act would have led to even further defections in the North toward the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Finally, an initially friendly division of the church seemed to be the only avenue that remained open. Neither side could claim victory, and both sides must share the shame and consequences of separation.” (p. 168)

“There proved to be...very little actually said or done directly about slavery, though it was in the background all the time, with constitutional matters kept to the foreground. Southerners did not attempt to

defend it; it was an evil[,] but one they felt they had to live with. Indeed, the discussion of constitutionality was a way of speaking in somewhat cloaked fashion about slaveholding, just as it had done for some years. This kept the debate more comfortable for both parties.” (pp. 169-170)

But “[t]he deed was done. The delegates and bishops scattered. Representatives of thirteen Southern conferences, in accordance with the General Conference Plan of Separation, met in Louisville in May 1845 in an organizing convention which established the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.” (p. 171)

OVERCOMING THE TIMIDITY OF BISHOPS

According to Bp. Mathews’ historical account, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, before the schism of 1844, did little or nothing to help their church face up to the challenge of slavery. They changed the subject, took refuge in church unity and growth, denied the moral matter at hand, and did not teach and lead the church as they were charged to teach and lead. The result was schism.

A quick check of the index of Set Apart to Serve, which was published in 1985, indicates that Bp. Mathews’ book does not cover United Methodist bishops of our time substantially responding to the challenges presented to the church by abortion and homosexuality. So, as the bishops of the 19th century backed away from the moral matter of slavery, the bishops of our time tend to back away from the moral matters of abortion and homosexuality. Our bishops are changing the subject, taking refuge in church unity and growth, denying the moral matters at hand, and not teaching and leading the church as they are charged to teach and lead. This seems to be an example of history repeating itself.

The point of this historical reflection is not to be unfairly critical of the bishops of The United Methodist Church today. The point is to learn from history and to encourage the bishops of United Methodism to teach Christian truth on abortion and homosexuality, in Christian love, to the church. Under the promise of providence, God would then take care of the rest. (Paul T. Stallworth) ♥

“SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS”

In preparation for the 2008 General Conference, Lifewatch put together “Significant Statements on The United Methodist Church and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).” This one-page document contained statements, from six prominent United Methodists, on RCRC. Below you will find the six statements and their authors.

“Christians believe God has come to us in the vulnerability of frail human flesh. We respond to this embodied love, enwombed in Mary, through how we

treat the most vulnerable among us—the poor, the elderly, our enemies, and the very young. Methodist people know and practice this in their lives. Would that their denomination would demonstrate it in the organizations it endorses.” —Dr. Jason Byassee, Christian Century, Chicago, IL (Dr. Byassee now directs the Center for Theology, Writing, and Media at Duke Divinity School.)

“In light of the increasing number of abortions for reasons of birth control and gender selection worldwide, it is appalling that general agencies of our church are active in an organization devoted to making sure that these abortions are performed free from government regulation. We should respect what our Social Principles clearly state and end our involvement with RCRC.” —Mr. Andreas Elfving, Secretary, Finland-Swedish Provisional Annual Conference

“When General Conference 2000 added a partial-birth abortion ban to the UM statement on abortion, it seemed a logical time to break ranks with the RCRC. As a new member of GBCS [General Board of Church and Society], I sought to express my conviction that our stand was no longer in sync with RCRC’s positions and initiatives. RCRC changed its web site to accurately reflect the new UM language, but it continued to advocate for the most extreme types of abortion. A recent check of RCRC’s site reveals that United Methodist beliefs are blended with other Protestant denominations and that a vague caveat (‘each denomination is free to express its own opinions and beliefs’) has been added. Even in the FAQs, when the question of partial-birth abortion is raised, no mention of the UM stance is made. Action at General Conference 2008 would be better late than never.” —Marget Sikes, Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, Tunnell Hill, GA

“As Ann Loar Brooks and I demonstrated in Holy Abortion? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, the RCRC sees abortion as a kind of holy warfare blessed by God. It promotes radical, unChristian views of sex and abortion that contradict the official positions of our church. Withdrawing from the RCRC is therefore the only responsible course of action if we wish to be a church marked by consistency and integrity.” —Dr. Michael J. Gorman, Dean, The Ecumenical Institute of Theology, Baltimore, MD

“The book, Holy Abortion?, makes a theological critique of RCRC that is stunning and conscience-awakening. United Methodists must reconsider their institutional relationship to this organization, or stand convicted of either hypocrisy or indifference toward an ethical perspective that twists basic Christian teachings to echo a culture of abortion. Our [or the UMC’s] stance on abortion does not justify our formal relationships with RCRC’s stated goals and

Hold this date on your calendar!
May 21, 2009 (Ascension of the Lord, Thursday)

**THEOLOGY OF THE BODY:
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Dr. Paul J. Griffiths
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Sheraton Hotel and Marina
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convictions. —Dr. Leicester R. Longden, Associate Professor of Evangelism and Discipleship, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA

“The Book of Discipline’s statement on the subject of abortion recognizes legitimate concerns on both sides of this perennial and painful debate. The Church urgently needs to find language, practices, and policies that give expression to our complex intuitions on this subject. Unfortunately, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice has little to contribute to this effort, because it recognizes only one legitimate side to this debate. Continued affiliation with the RCRC is inconsistent with our principles as United Methodists and a hindrance to the urgent task of finding common ground.” —Dr. R. Kendall Soulen, Professor of Systematic Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC ♥

**GENERAL CONFERENCE GEM:
“RECOGNITION OF BONHOEFFER”**

Rev. Charles Sigman—pastor of First United Methodist Church in Newport, AR—submitted a resolution to the 2008 General Conference. Rev. Sigman’s resolution was titled “Recognition of Bonhoeffer,” and it read: “In keeping in line with the Church of England and the Church of Wales, we, as United Methodists, should also recognize Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a modern day martyr for the cause of Christ.” The resolution’s rationale stated: “During a time of grave darkness in Nazi German, Bonhoeffer shined the light of Christ all the way to a hangman’s noose. Nearly every clergy has studied him and used him in sermons and theological discourse. It is time we recognize his accomplishments and martyrdom of the highest calling.”

As if by divine providence, the resolution was passed by General Conference 2008. Early in the conference, the Faith and Order Legislative Committee adopted the resolution by a vote of 30-29, with 7 not voting. Later, on the final day of the conference (May 2) at 10:25 p.m., the resolution was adopted by General Conference by a 2-1 hand vote.

The adoption of this resolution by the 2008 General Conference is remarkable for two reasons. First, because Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the leading lights of Protestant theology in the 20th century. His life, ministry, and work have much to teach The United Methodist Church in our time and place.

Second, the adoption of “Recognition of Bonhoeffer” is notable because Bonhoeffer’s moral-theological witness was powerfully truthful on the dignity of the human person—even in the midst of the Nazi culture of death. According to Bonhoeffer, the dignity of the human person included the dignity of the unborn at the earliest stages of development. In his *Ethics* (Macmillan, 1955 and Collier Books, 1986), Bonhoeffer wrote: “Destruction of the embryo in the mother’s womb is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed upon this nascent life. To raise the question whether we are here concerned already with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue. The simple fact is that God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life. And that is nothing but murder... [Various] considerations must no doubt have a quite decisive influence on our personal and pastoral attitude towards the person concerned, but they cannot in any way alter the fact of murder.” (pp. 175-176)

Thanks be to God that General Conference 2008 passed the resolution entitled “Recognition of Bonhoeffer.” We trust that this recognition will, in fact, theologically broaden and deepen The United Methodist Church, its congregations, its laity, its clergy, and its bishops. (Paul T. Stallsworth) ♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

• You are invited—even encouraged!—to 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. Now you can offer support in another way. You can fortify 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.

• If you are missing a back issue (or two) of Lifewatch, and would like to receive it (or them), then make a request to Cindy Evans in the Lifewatch office. Also, if you are involved in a residential move, please send along your change address to Cindy Evans—by letter, by postcard, by email, by fax, or by telephone—so that you can continue receiving Lifewatch without missing an issue. Thank you.

• During 2008 General Conference conversations and debates, this claim was repeated countless times: the truth is that The United Methodist Church is not of one mind on the matter of homosexuality. That is, well, true. If a poll were taken today, it would certainly reveal that a minority of United Methodists oppose the Church’s traditional teaching on homosexuality. There is division in our household. That is an empirical truth, a sociological truth. However, what about the Christian truth about human sexuality that is revealed in the Bible and that has been taught by the Church for nearly 2,000 years? It seems that is the far more important truth.

• Maria McFadden edits The Human Life Review (\$25/year sent to The Human Life Foundation, Inc./353 Lexington Avenue, Suite 802/New York, NY 10016), which is essential reading for our time and place. She helps to introduce the Spring 2008 issue by summarizing Stephen Vincent’s article, “Spitzer’s Bad RHAPP,” in this way: “Governor Eliot Spitzer [of New York State] resigned in disgrace last March, after admitting to heavy involvement in a prostitution ring. As spectacular as his fall was to witness, it was not all that shocking. As Vincent writes, ‘pro-lifers knew that Eliot Spitzer had already crossed the line of decency,’ and had repeatedly shown a ‘callous disregard for human life.’ In 2002, as attorney general, Spitzer had set up a Reproductive Rights Unit, and then launched an intimidation campaign against crisis pregnancy centers across New York State. That campaign failed. But last year, ‘heavily beholden to the pro-abortion forces that bankrolled his runs for state attorney general and governor,’ Spitzer introduced one of the most extreme abortion bills ever—the Reproductive Health and Privacy Protection Act (RHAPP), which would, among other things, permit non-doctors to perform abortions, and allow 12-year-old girls to get abortions without parental consent. In a nutshell, RHAPP would enshrine abortion as a ‘civil right,’ and Spitzer, says Vincent, ‘promised to push it in the 2008 legislative session.’ But ‘fate’ intervened: Ironically, on the day his scandal broke, Spitzer was to have met with Cardinal Edward Egan and other New York bishops who rightly feared that passage of the bill would force Catholic hospitals to provide ‘reproductive services.’ New York’s new governor, David Paterson, had other priorities in the days after he took over from Spitzer—like dealing with press revelations of his own (and his

wife's!) extramarital indiscretions—so, thankfully, RHAPP has been put on hold. Though Paterson is no friend of the unborn, Vincent hopes that the radical nature of this bill will make it 'impolitic' for him to push it with Spitzer's zeal." (pp. 3-4, emphasis added)

- Nat Hentoff is a self-described secular Jew who writes a column for the Village Voice. In "Playing Games with Innocent Life" (The Washington Times, March 31, 2008 and The Human Life Review, Spring 2008), Hentoff notes that he once contended that the death of Terri Schiavo was "the longest public execution in American history." Furthermore, he writes, "most Americans did not know that 29 major national disability-rights organizations filed legal briefs and lobbied Congress to understand that this was not a right-to-die case, but one about the right to continue living."

In addition, according to Hentoff, "[T]he husband of the brain-damaged Terri Schiavo, Michael Schiavo, had stopped testing and rehabilitation for her in 1993, 12 years before her death. Moreover, for years he had been living with another woman, with whom he had two children and has since married. Michael Schiavo has continually insisted that he succeeded in having Terri's feeding tube removed because he was respecting Terri's wishes, which she could no longer communicate, that she did not want to be kept alive by artificial means.

"But at a January 2000 trial, as reported by Notre Dame Law Professor O. Carter Snead in

Constitutional Quarterly (published by the University of Minnesota Law School in its [W]inter 2005 issue) five witnesses testified on whether Terri would have refused artificial nutrition, including water, in the condition she was in. Her mother and a close friend of Terri testified that she had said clearly she would want these essential life needs. The other three witnesses said Terri would have approved the removal of her feeding tube.

"These last three were in alliance on what became a death penalty: Michael Schiavo, his brother and his sister-in-law. It was on the basis of that 3-to-2 vote that Florida state Judge George Greer ruled that 'clear and convincing evidence' allowed him to remove her from life, and then 19 judges in six courts, including federal courts, agreed. Like the press, those judges did no independent investigation of their own."

It is very important that the conventional wisdom about the death of Terri Schiavo be directed by the truth of what actually happened to her.

- This is written the day after Senator Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. United Methodists (and others) in the Lifewatch community extend to President-elect Obama our congratulations.

While Lifewatch did not enter the political debates during this election cycle, most of us were paying enough attention to know that President-elect Obama is quite politically pro-choice. That acknowledged, his "victory speech" to the nation on Election Day contains several promises, to the nation,

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* Our bishops, then and now
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that we would be most wise to ponder and remember.

For example, looking to the future, President-elect Obama said: "... I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. And, above all, I will ask you to join in the work of remaking this nation, the only way it's been done for 221 years—block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand..."

"It can't happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice. So let us summon a new spirit of responsibility, where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves but each other..."

"In this country, we rise or fall as one people. Let's resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that have poisoned our politics for so long..."

"And while the Democratic Party has won a great victory tonight, we do so with a measure of humility and determination to heal the divides that have held back our progress..."

"Tonight we proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the

enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope..."

Above, President-elect Obama promises to: listen to those who disagree with him, begin "remaking this nation," call all citizens to greater service and sacrifice and responsibility for others, avoid destructive partisanship, pursue the "ideals" of "democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope." These indeed are hopeful promises. To these promises, President Obama should be held accountable, in truth and in love.

In response to President-elect Obama's promises, Lifewatch will do two things. First, Lifewatch will pray for, and encourage others to pray for, God's providence over the Obama Administration. Second, Lifewatch will hold the Obama Administration accountable to its stated ideals, to the highest American ideals, and to the natural moral law that God has placed in all human hearts. Those are Lifewatch's promises.

—Paul T. Stallsworth♥

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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."