

A WORD ABOUT FINANCES

Thank you, and thank you again, for your generous response to Bishop Timothy Whitaker's thoughtful fundraising letter of September 1, 2013. Because of God's grace and your gifts, Lifewatch keeps witnessing to the Gospel of Life. And because of God's grace and your forthcoming gifts, Lifewatch will go forward and strive to help The United Methodist Church to become more faithful to Jesus Christ and less accommodated to the moral trendiness of American culture.

Also, thank you for reading, and responding to, the enclosed letter. (PTS)

METAXAS ON WILBERFORCE AND BONHOEFFER, ABORTION AND LOVE

Eric Metaxas, as you probably know, is the author of the two excellent books Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery (HarperCollins, 2007) and Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy (Thomas Nelson, 2010). Both of these books by Metaxas were New York Times bestsellers. In addition, since the death of the evangelical leader Charles Colson, Metaxas seems to have been handed Colson's baton of leadership and witness in the public arena. For example, he regularly contributes to the radio program *BreakPoint*, and he continues to advance The Manhattan Declaration (on life, marriage, and religious liberty) to serve the common good in American society. Both of these activities were initiated and carried forward by Colson.

Now Metaxas has written "The War on the Unborn," which appears in the current issue of The Human Life Review (Summer 2013). His is a good, solid essay about where American society is with regard to abortion.

In his essay, Metaxas is especially pointed about abortion in the African-American community: "For the black community, abortion verges on genocide. It kills more black Americans than gun violence, cancer, AIDS, and heart disease combined. Can we doubt that abortionists target minority communities because they know there's money to

be made? This may be a big reason why, according to the Guttmacher Institute, black women abort their babies at *five times* the rate of white women. This means that black women who abort suffer higher rates of breast and cervical cancers—both linked to abortion—and also a greater incidence of post-abortion trauma. Is this not something our media should be talking about? Alveda King, the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a post-abortive mother, puts these statistics in ghastly perspective: 'What would Martin Luther King, Jr., who dreamed of having his children judged by the content of their characters, do if he'd lived to see the contents of thousands of children's skulls emptied into the bottomless caverns of the abortionists' pits?'"

Wilberforce and Slavery

Metaxas goes on to discuss Wilberforce, slavery, and abortion: "One of my heroes, British abolitionist William Wilberforce [1759-1833], well understood the Christian teaching about treating all human beings with dignity. But as a parliamentarian, he also understood something about political battle tactics. If you saw the film about his life, "Amazing Grace," you will likely remember a particular scene in which he dramatically gets the attention of upper-class society types. I recalled that scene recently given all the horrors revealed in the murder trial of abortionist Kermit Gosnell in Philadelphia. Wilberforce was a tireless advocate for those who were regarded as mere chattel, but he knew that words alone often fall on deaf ears. So he arranged for what his upper-class guests thought would be a pleasant boat outing. But Wilberforce sailed them right past a slave ship, close enough to smell and see the inhuman conditions the slaves were forced to endure. The party-goers were overwhelmed, upset, nauseated. What Wilberforce did may not have been polite, but it was certainly effective!

"Similarly with the Kermit Gosnell trial, many Americans who casually considered themselves pro-choice were forced to see and hear, perhaps for the first time, what really happens in abortion clinics..." (To see for yourself, google and go to "3801 Lancaster" [the street address of Gosnell's abortion clinic], click on "Watch the Film" and then on the triangle, and the film begins.)

Bonhoeffer, Abortion, and Love

Toward the end of his essay, Metaxas brings up Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), the Lutheran pastor and theologian

who was executed by the Nazis: "Finally, while I believe that Christians must speak out passionately on the issue of abortion, how we speak about it is as important as the points we make. We must remember that, apart from the grace of God, chances are we would be on the other side of this issue. We tend sometimes to demonize our enemies instead of loving them and, more to the point, showing them that we love them. We would do well to heed the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had no doubts about the evil of abortion. 'Destruction of the embryo in the mother's womb,' he wrote, 'is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed upon this nascent life.' Raising the question whether we are here concerned already with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue.' What's clear, Bonhoeffer said, is that 'God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life.' Abortion, Bonhoeffer bluntly concluded, is 'murder.'

"At the same time, as I noted in *BreakPoint*, Bonhoeffer spoke compassionately about the 'many different motives'—such as despair, economic destitution, and misery—that often lay behind the act. He went so far as to say that 'the guilt may often lie with the community rather than with the individual.' Thus, while abortion is certainly murder, we should think twice about labeling the mother a 'murderer.' We must also keep in mind why it is possible to love the sinner while hating the sin: grace and forgiveness. We know that our sins, no matter how great, have been and can be forgiven. We know, some of us from personal experience, that this most decidedly includes abortion. This knowledge is what makes efforts like those of my wife possible. [Susanne Metaxas is the president of the Midtown Pregnancy Support Center in New York City.]

"But pro-abortion people simply don't know this. They hear our condemnation of abortion as a condemnation of themselves. That's why our love for them cannot be an afterthought; the kind of thing we say *after* people have reacted in hurt or anger. Instead, we must lead with our love. We must love them before we dream of reproaching them. After all, that was Jesus' way of doing things. While he attacked the Pharisees, he had compassion on the harassed and helpless people. He even wept over the city that would crucify him."

A few years ago, addressing the challenge that Metaxas sets before us, Father Richard John Neuhaus often recalled the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. that went something like this: Those whom we would change we must first love; and they must know that we love them.

Eric Metaxas is a lively truth-teller for our day. The truth he serves emerges from the ministry of our Lord, is carried by the Church through the ages, is reflected through the lives of faithful disciples like Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer, and challenges contemporary United Methodists to do difficult things in American society. O Lord, give us what we need to learn, to trust, and to obey. (PTS) ♥

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

DAVID AGAINST GOLIATH: LOCAL CHURCH AGAINST RCRC

by Bill Clute

In late 2011, I approached the Administrative Board of my congregation—Memorial United Methodist Church of Greer, SC—with my concerns regarding the involvement of the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) and the United Methodist Women (UMW) with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). I outlined the facts of conflict between the actions and positions of the RCRC versus those of The United Methodist Church as stated in The Book of Discipline. The pastor of my church at the time was not opposed to RCRC, and in principle he stood against any actions that challenged RCRC. Even so, to his credit, he made sure that I was able to voice my concerns and that all procedures of our Administrative Board were in line with The Book of Discipline.

After presenting the facts for the Administrative Board to review, I noted that the Board had three (3) questions to answer:

1. Does the Board agree with my assertion that the relationship between The United Methodist Church and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is in contradiction to the policies of The Book of Discipline?
2. If the answer to #1 is yes, should the Board take action?
3. If the answer to #2 is yes, what action should the Board take?

We had numerous meetings over several months before votes were taken. When the votes finally occurred, these were the results. On question #1, the Board unanimously voted yes. On question #2, a majority voted yes with a handful opposing. On question #3, it was decided that I would draft a letter and petition to be sent to area churches and then spread the effort out across the state in an attempt to have the South Carolina Conference stand with other Annual Conferences that in the past have sought to dissolve the relationship between The United Methodist Church and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

We went through a few drafts before a final letter and a final petition were agreed upon. In May of 2013, the letter and petition were sent out to my home district, the Greenville District. Slater United Methodist Church quickly agreed to partner with us. Covenant United Methodist Church—of Greer, SC—invited me to speak about the petition to its Church Council. Covenant Church's pastor enthusiastically supported our effort. Its Council listened to my presentation, asked some questions, agreed to do its own research, and promised to come back at a later date to discuss and vote. In July, Covenant Church's Council voted to partner with us.

At that time, I also decided to send follow-up emails to the pastors of all the churches that I had not heard from. I was a bit dismayed at the number of those that responded that they had not seen or heard of the petition. So I sent them copies via email. I am even more dismayed at the number of churches that have not responded at all to either the hard copy that was mailed or to the emails sent directly to the pastors.

In late June, I sent the letter and petition to the churches in our neighboring Spartanburg District. In mid-August, I sent follow-up emails to the pastors of that district. Like the Greenville District pastors, many Spartanburg District pastors replied that they had neither seen nor heard of the letter and petition. So they have now been sent copies via email. Some have expressed agreement with the petition and stated they would present it to their Board/Council. I look forward to hearing from them.

And so our project moves forward.

Mr. Clute—of Greer, SC—can be contacted at bill@billcluteairshows.com.♥

Lifewatch is thankful for this exemplary effort of Mr. Clute and his Administrative Board at Memorial United Methodist Church in Greer, SC. All United Methodist pastors and congregations, in South Carolina, are encouraged to join this effort to separate institutions of The United Methodist Church from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights.

Recently, Lifewatch has been emphasizing the importance of courage in witnessing for life. Mr. Clute and his Board have demonstrated more than nominal courage in initiating this project that aims to increase the faithfulness of The United Methodist Church to the Gospel of Life. Thanks be to God the Holy Spirit, who is the source of our courage in all things. (PTS)

LIFEWATCH NEEDS YOU AT YOUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

by Dr. John E. Juergensmeyer, Ph.D., J.D.

Few Annual Conferences have Lifewatch display tables. However, having put together a Lifewatch display table for several sessions of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, I would like to encourage you to do the same at your 2014 Annual Conference this spring.

If you are a lay member of your Annual Conference, plan to set up a Lifewatch display table. If you are an alternate lay member of your Annual Conference, plan to set up a display table. Even if you are not a lay member (or alternate) of your Annual Conference, plan to attend the conference and set up a display table.

Get started immediately. Call the person, at your conference headquarters, who is in charge of Annual Conference display tables. Follow the instructions given. Fill out the brief form that is usually required. Pay the modest fee, if one is mandated. (Lifewatch might help you pay, if need be.) Provide a copy of letterhead and an issue of the newsletter, to prove Lifewatch is a recognized United Methodist ministry, if requested. Prepare a display for a standard 8'x3' table. Obtain literature for the display from our Website (www.lifewatch.org), and make sufficient copies. Contact Mrs. Cindy Evans for more literature that can be distributed. Decorate an accordion-fold display board (or two) from Kinkos, Office Max, or any office-supply store. Stand by your table, during all or some of the conference, to speak with people who pass by and to offer them Lifewatch literature. Provide a sign-up sheet for those who would like to receive our newsletter each quarter; finally, send the sheet to Lifewatch.

THESE ANNUAL EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE ON JANUARY 22, 2014 (WEDS.)

AT

**THE UNITED METHODIST BUILDING
100 MARYLAND AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC**

**9:30 a.m. LIFEWATCH SERVICE OF
WORSHIP WITH
BISHOP KENNETH H. CARTER, JR.
(FL AREA) PREACHING**

**3:00 p.m. LIFEWATCH
BOARD MEETING**

Organize a large group from your church to attend!

Conversation with most United Methodists, during Annual Conference, is enjoyable. A most common comment from delegates will be, "I never knew a United Methodist pro-life group exists." Many conference attendees will express support for Lifewatch and its mission. Some will comment on particular pieces of literature on the table. Back issues of the newsletter—particularly those with the annual Lifewatch sermon—will be well received.

A display table at your Annual Conference would be an excellent way to spread the word about the Gospel of Life and Lifewatch, and to meet Annual Conference members, both clergy and lay, who are committed to (or at least engaged by) pro-life concerns.

Dr. Juergensmeyer is a member of the Lifewatch Advisory Board, a lay member of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, and a member of Wesley United Methodist Church in Elgin, IL. ♥

WHAT POPE FRANCIS IS SAYING

The Interview

Last Friday (September 20) before midday, three United Methodists had asked this United Methodist pastor, "Have you heard about the Pope's recent interview?" They had gone on to suggest that, according to the interview, the Pope seems to be pulling back from the Church's teaching on abortion and homosexuality.

The September 19 story in [The New York Times](#)—"Pope Says Church Is 'Obsessed' with Gays, Abortion, and Birth Control" by Laurie Goodstein—offered published evidence for their concern. Ms. Goodstein's report began: "Six months into his papacy, Pope Francis sent shock waves through the Roman Catholic Church on Thursday with the publication of his remarks that the church had grown 'obsessed' with abortion, gay marriage and contraception, and that he had chosen not to talk about those issues despite recriminations from critics."

So, what are we to make of these claims?

First of all, we would be wise to remember that the [Times](#) is not the most objective reporter of things Roman Catholic. In fact, it should be said that the [Times](#) is a constant critic of the Catholic Church and her traditional teaching.

Then, a brief remembrance of the prior two Popes might be helpful. John Paul II was a brilliant philosophical Pope for the Roman Catholic Church. He helped the larger ecumenical community to understand "the Gospel of Life," in opposition to "the culture of death." Benedict XVI was a sophisticated theological Pope for Roman Catholicism. He warned all the churches about "the dictatorship of relativism." Now, Francis seems to be an evangelically pastoral Pope for the Church. Hoping God will bring change to the world, he is committed to engaging the world. Each of these three Popes has had a different approach and a different emphasis and a different style and a different tone, but the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church remains the same.

The recent interview with Pope Francis which stirred up so much conversation, and which can be found at <http://www.americamagazine.org/print/156341>, is a wonderful read. It is especially helpful for those serving as pastors and lay leaders in local churches, including United Methodist churches, today. Throughout the interview, Pope Francis patiently reveals his evangelical-pastoral orientation. What follows are several quotations, from the interview, that reveal the Pope to be both evangelical (in the sense that God's love brings transformation to people) and pastoral (in the sense that the Church is commissioned to engage all people in respectful, thoughtful, winsome ways).

- When asked, Who are you?, Pope Francis replied: "I do not know what might be the most fitting description.... I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner.... Yes, perhaps I can say that I am a bit astute, that I can adapt to circumstances, but it is also true that I am a bit naive. Yes, but the best summary, the one that comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this: I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon." Here, his evangelical spirit and pastoral dedication are unmistakable.
- Asked about discernment, the Pope said: "Thanks to magnanimity, we can always look at the horizon from the position where we are. That means being able to do the little things of every day with a big heart open to God and to others. That means being able to appreciate the small things inside large horizons, those of the Kingdom of God." Does this not apply to a pastoral ministry with evangelical commitment?
- In speaking about why he was so impressed by the Jesuit Peter Faber (1506-46), the Pope noted: "[His] dialogue with all, even the most remote and even with his opponents; his simple piety, a certain naivete perhaps, his being available straightaway, his careful interior discernment, the fact that he was a man capable of great and strong decisions but also capable of being so gentle and loving." The Pope's respect for evangelical engagement, in pastoral ministry, is notable.
- When speaking about what it means to "think with the Church," he said: "I see the holiness in the patience of the people of God: a woman who is raising children, a

man who works to bring home the bread, the sick, the elderly priests who have so many wounds but have a smile on their faces because they served the Lord, the sisters who work hard and live a hidden sanctity. This is for me the common sanctity. I often associate sanctity with patience...but also as a constancy in going forward, day by day. This is the sanctity of the militant church also mentioned by St. Ignatius. This was the sanctity of my parents: my dad, my mom, my grandmother Rosa who loved me so much.... She is a saint who has suffered so much, also spiritually, and yet always went forward with courage." The power of God (which is evangelical) and the people of God (pastoral) are obviously taken seriously by this Pope.

- Describing the church as a "field hospital," the Pope declared: "I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.... And you have to start from the ground up."

"...In pastoral ministry we must accompany people, and we must heal their wounds.

"How are we treating the people of God? I dream of a church that is a mother and shepherdess. The church's ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the Good Samaritan, who washes, cleans, and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin." Again, the Pope reveals himself to be both evangelical and pastoral.

- Continuing to address the tasks of the Church today, he said: "We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage, and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that. But when we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in a context. The teaching of the Church, for that matter, is clear, and I am a son of the Church, but it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time..."

"...The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.

"I say this also thinking about the preaching and content of our preaching. A beautiful homily, a genuine sermon, must begin with the first proclamation, with the proclamation of salvation. There is nothing more solid, deep, and sure than this proclamation. Then you have to do catechesis. Then you can draw even a moral consequence. But the proclamation of the saving love of God comes before moral and religious imperatives." According to the Pope, the sermon can, and should, be evangelical and pastoral.

Many other quotations from the interview could be listed to underline the evangelical and pastoral emphases of Pope Francis.

The Public Statement

Being evangelical and pastoral does not mean that the Pope is a moral relativist. The day after the publication of his interview, Pope Francis spoke strongly against abortion to a group of gynecologists. A story from the Catholic News Service ("Pope Condemns Abortion as Product of 'Throwaway Culture'" by Francis X. Rocca, September 20, 2013) reported: "In his strongest public words to date on the subject of abortion, Pope Francis affirmed the sacredness of unborn human life and linked its defense to the pursuit of social justice.

"In all its phases and at every age, human life is always sacred and always of quality. And not as a matter of faith, but of reason and science!" the Pope said September 20 to a gathering of Catholic gynecologists.

"Pope Francis characterized abortion as a product of a 'widespread mentality of profit, the "throwaway culture," which has today enslaved the hearts and minds of so many.'

"That mentality, he said, 'calls for the elimination of human beings, above all if they are physically or socially weaker. Our response to that mentality is a decisive and unhesitating Yes to life.'

"The Pope grouped together unborn children, the aged, and the poor as among the most vulnerable people whom Christians are called specially to love.

"In the fragile human being, each one of us is invited to recognize the face of the Lord, who in his human flesh experienced the indifference and solitude to which we often condemn the poorest, whether in developing countries or in wealthy societies,' he said.

"Every unborn child, though unjustly condemned to be aborted, has the face of the Lord, who even before his birth, and then as soon as he was born, experienced the rejection of the world,' he said. 'And every old person, even if infirm and at the end of his days, carries with him the face of Christ. They must not be thrown away!'"

In his recent interview and in his more recent public statement, Pope Francis has proven himself to be evangelical, pastoral, and truthful. That makes for the most powerful ministry of all. That sets a standard for the whole Church to admire and follow.

Pope Francis, continue faithful to Christ and His Church, for the sake of the world—and for the sake of your Protestant sisters and brothers! (PTS) ♥

GOOD CALLS AND DEMANDING VOWS

One of the genuine joys of serving as the president of the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, and as the editor of Lifewatch, is that every so often United Methodists from across the church (whom I have not met) will call (or email). Often, they will begin their conversation with something like this: "Recently, I discovered what my pastor [or bishop or denomination] thinks about abortion. It surprised, or even shocked, me.

"In all its phases and at every age, human life is always sacred and always of quality. And not as a matter of faith, but of reason and science!"

Therefore, I went on a search of the Web and found Lifewatch. Now, I want to ask you, "What should I do?"

Again, I am thankful for such calls. They are made by brothers and sisters in Christ who are deeply disturbed by the compromised and compromising nature of United Methodist teaching and practice on life and abortion. These brothers and sisters sincerely want to know how to respond faithfully, as United Methodist Christians in United Methodist churches, to the challenge that abortion presents today. I am grateful for such brothers and sisters in Christ. Indeed, I am grateful to God for them.

In response to these inquiring United Methodists, I listen to their stories. More often than not, their reports from the front demonstrate moral and theological clarity on the part of the caller. I note that the Holy Spirit is probably calling them to witness for life in their local churches and/or beyond. This pastor goes on to suggest that the callers sign up to receive Lifewatch on a regular basis, so that they might continue to be informed on the matters at hand. (That should not surprise anyone!) Then we move to what the callers can do, in their particular situations, to witness for life in the most winsome ways. For example, some need to have personal conversation with their pastor. Some with their church school teacher. Some with their district superintendent, others with their bishop. Or some will want to speak with their congregation's missions/outreach committee chair to propose supporting a pregnancy resource center in their city or town or sending an annual gift to Lifewatch. Or some will need to do some serious research on the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), the pro-choice lobby with which two United Methodist agencies affiliate. Generally, my suggestions vary according to the concerns presented in the call.

But then I usually conclude such telephone conversations by offering a challenge to the callers to be faithful to The Baptismal Covenant they have entered. I point out that The Baptismal Covenant contains six (6) vows, to which they have affirmatively responded. Those vows, those promises, offer general guidance to all United Methodists—but especially to those wanting to be faithful in their witness for life in their United Methodist churches. God uses these covenant vows to guide and direct our lives within, and beyond, The United Methodist Church as we strive to witness for the Gospel of Life.

Please remember the following questions to which we, as United Methodists, have answered "I do" or "I will." (You might even cut them out of this newsletter, and post them on your refrigerator.)

1. Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin? **I do.**
2. Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves? **I do.**
3. Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your

Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races? **I do.**

4. According to the grace given to you, will you remain a faithful member of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representative in the world? **I will.**

5. As a member of Christ's universal Church, will you be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries? **I will.**

6. As a member of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness? **I will.** (The United Methodist Hymnal)

With the Holy Spirit's power, these vows guide us, as United Methodists, to respond faithfully to the call of Jesus Christ to defend and protect "the least of these" (Matthew 25)—including unborn children and their mothers. With the Holy Spirit's power, these vows teach us to be faithful, persistent, wise, loving, and courageous in our witness for life. With the Holy Spirit's power, these vows train us to be the Christians we were baptized, into Christ and His Church, to be.

I hope those calls keep coming in. They are a joy to receive. Through those calls and in the conversations that follow, we are all challenged to be faithful to the God of the Gospel of Life. (PTS)♥

LETTERS TO LIFEWATCH

[undated]

Editor Stallsworth:

Thank you for your perennially good service through Lifewatch. May I suggest that one square inch or less of each issue feature the most recent available statistics on abortion in the U.S.A.—perhaps statistics pertaining to the most recent two years, respectively, and perhaps a brief comment on any significant trends in the statistics.

In Christ,

(Rev.) Clyde F. Galow/Aurora, IL

Rev. Galow, thank you for your kind note and for your suggestion. Though we will probably not carry a kind of statistical update in each issue of the newsletter, we will keep in mind the most important statistic of all: each day in the United States, over 3,000 unborn children die from, and their mothers harmed severely by, abortion. That single number is at once shocking, numbing, and motivating. Again, thanks for your engagement with Lifewatch.

In Christ,

Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth

September 16, 2013

Hi, Paul,

Grace and peace today. I read just now your tribute to your father. Lovely. Congratulations as you welcome Luke Adam—what a great name! Also, thanks for engagement of the UMM with the cradle ministry. Very powerful witness. Blessings,

Bishop Hope [Morgan Ward/Raleigh Area of The United Methodist Church/Raleigh, NC]

September 30, 2013

Dear Paul:

I have just read the most recent issue of Lifewatch and wanted to write a note of encouragement to thank you for your leadership in this important work. I was especially heartened to learn about the resolution passed by your annual conference on the Gosnell affair and the resonance [it] has found in wider Methodist circles. Keep up the good work!...

I remember my visit to Whiteville and to your church with great pleasure and appreciation.

In hopes that our paths will cross again along the way,
Yours ever in Christ,
[Dr.] Timothy George, Dean/Beeson Divinity School/
Samford University/ Birmingham, AL

October 2, 2013

Dear Paul:

Nobody told me I believe, but I should've known—the older you get the slower you get, as evidenced by my response to your sharing with us Lyle Clyde Stallsworth, in life and in death. I understand your constant thanksgiving for your Dad, for the many good years you had with him, and he with you. Clearly, as he was a blessing to you, so you have been to him. And as a P.S., may I congratulate you on your second grandson, Luke Adam—the beginning of a fitting replacement for Lyle Clyde...

And speaking of the Church, I hope you are as pleased with the new Bishop of Rome as I am...

I continue to scratch out potential blogs which rarely get to my computer let alone are published. One of my latest unpublished concerns is what I am talking about, or praying for, when with Jesus I pray, "deliver us from evil"—as opposed, for instance, to "forgive us our sins."

Well, Paul—just a short note to say hello, but above all to congratulate you on the good life you have had with your Dad and will have with your new grandson, Luke. God bless you and your family and your church.

As always,

Your old friend, Bob

The Reverend Dr. Robert T. ("Bob") Osborn—who continues to live in Durham, NC—taught (or tried to teach) this pastor "The Theology of Karl Barth" at Duke Divinity School in 1975. He was, and remains, a marvelous teacher of theology and the Church's faith.

October 2, 2013

Rev. Stallsworth:

My condolences for the loss of your dad. May God's peace rest both on and inside you and your family, as you/we await that "blessed hope."

There is a verse in the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers" [that goes like this:] "Faith of our fathers, we will strive to win all nations unto Thee; and through the truth that comes from God, we all shall then be truly free."

I lost my dad two years ago. He, too, like yours, had a profound impact on my life. Your article [on your dad] could have described my dad. Thanks for sharing him with us.

I'm writing to show appreciation for the Lifewatch newsletter and ministry. I always look forward to your

insight, wisdom, and use of words. Through them, I can see your heart—inspired by our heavenly Father and yet first influenced by your dad. I thank God for this work and witness to The United Methodist Church and the society at large. This is why I support this ministry.

Your writing is so different and fresh as compared to this world's news of attack, criticize, and blast the opponent—or the opponent's ideas. Instead, I read truth and love, truth with grace...what a difference! Thank you.

Keep up the good work; keep striving in His strength. Rest often. Be patient. God is working. Be encouraged. Love in Christ,
Frank J. Kaffenberger/Shelby Township, Michigan

October 7, 2013

Dear Paul:

My condolences on the death of your father. Your recent editorial on him [September 1, 2013] made me think of my own Kansas father, who also had profound respect for everyone, was a man of moral principle, had a strong work ethic, and was a faithful church goer. He wasn't a K-State sports fan, but otherwise our dads seem to have a lot—a lot of good things—in common.

Which reminds me, although I don't recall writing to you about it, your editorial regarding the Clutter murders (Lifewatch, Dec. 2011) also made an impression on me. I was too young to remember any of it and didn't live close by; but I read In Cold Blood many years ago, and it has always stuck in my memory: an unspeakable, insane act recounted in beautiful prose. Your little editorial brought back all the strange and disturbing and confusing feelings I had when I read the book.

Hope all is well with you and yours.

Blessings,
Dr. Dale C. Allison, Jr./Princeton Theological Seminary/
Princeton, NJ

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

• Why is it that, for over 40 years, The United Methodist Church has been so challenged, even roiled, by the matters of abortion and homosexuality? Certainly, forgetting ecumenical, historic Christianity's teaching on these issues has not helped. But there might be a deeper reason. The deepest reason might be that we, as The United Methodist Church, have lost confidence in the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to forgive, redeem, and transform sinners like all of us. Only when a church has confidence in the power of the Gospel will that church be willing, on occasion (that is, not during every Sunday sermon), to call sins—even abortion and sexual immorality—sins. But those sins are not the last word. The last word is God's forgiving and transforming love, which entered this world most profoundly through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Confidence in this Gospel, which is making all things new, encourages a church to engage the world and its glamorous but false answers to our problems. Today, we can have boundless confidence in the Gospel. No matter what the world says about abortion. And no matter what the world says about human sexuality. Trust the Gospel. Be faithful to the Gospel. And fear not.

• The Reverend Dr. Douglas D. Webster is the Professor of Divinity, Pastoral Theology, and Christian Preaching at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. In a sermon ("Living in the Tension"), he concludes: "We do not choose the defining issue of our time—it is thrust upon us. As far as I am concerned, I wish it had nothing to do with sexuality and personal feelings, but it does. I wish it did not divide churches and families, but it does.... I wish I could say that everyone is entitled to his opinion, each to his own way, but I cannot. I suppose we could overlook the lordship of Jesus Christ in this matter and the authority of God's Word and become more open-minded. We could rationalize the issue

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and claim that it's like the racial issue or the gender issue. We could do a lot with this issue, but what we do will define us. How we respond will separate the sons of Isaiah from the sons of Ahaz. It will determine whether God is for us or against us." ("Beeson Divinity School's Role in Shaping Evangelical Christianity" by Dr. John Woodbridge, in Beeson: The Blessing of Theological Education)

- "In science, my faith is judged obscurantist; in ethics, mere animus; in practicality, irrelevant; in love, archaic. In the [public] square, I am silenced; at school, mocked; in business, fined; at entertainment, derided; in the home, patronized; at work, muffled. My leaders are disrespected; my founder blasphemed by the new culture, new religion, and new philosophy which, to paraphrase Benedict XVI's 'Regensburg Address,' suffers from an aversion to the fullness of questions, insisting that questions are meaningful only when limited to a scope much narrower than my catholic range of wonder.

"I am lonely..."

"To be a man of faith, however irenic, is to be lonely, especially in ugly times, but this was known by the one praying while his friends slept, and by his mother. Have I the character to welcome loneliness even as I offer myself? Have I the stamina for cheerfulness if my faith is

the very cause of being lonely?"

These thoughtful words were written by Dr. R. J. Snell, who is the director of the philosophy program at Eastern University; and they are from "I Am Lonely," which appeared on the On the Square blog, on October 14, 2013, at www.firstthings.com.

- My favorite coffee mug, given as a gift by a sister in Christ and in ordained ministry, declares "Calvinism: THIS MUG CHOSE ME" on one side, and "Arminianism: I CHOSE THIS MUG" on the other side. No, I do not drink my coffee with the Arminian side always closest to my heart... If a third panel were to be added to this mug, perhaps it would read: "Wesleyanism: THIS MUG WARMS ME."

- *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* "Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail."♥

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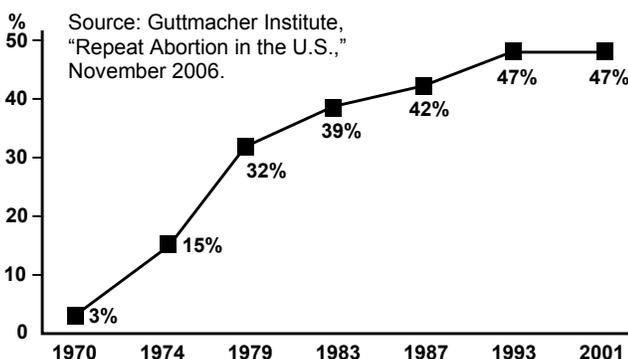
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LIFEWATCH INFOGRAPHIC

Percentage of abortions that are repeats (2 or more)



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