

THE LOVE OF GOD *VERSUS* THE ABORTION OF CHILDREN

Care Net does outstanding pro-life ministry of all kinds. The following article appeared on Care Net's blog on August 15, 2018: "The most powerful force in this world is the love of God. From Genesis to Revelation, we read the story of God's relentless pursuit of His fallen creation and His undying commitment to redemption, reconciliation, and restoration. When women and men encounter this transformational love, it changes **everything**.

"Just ask Kelley.

"Kelley had three kids and what could best be described as a failed marriage. Though she had given her all to her relationship with her husband, things went from bad to worse. Heartbroken, Kelley sought love in another man...but found an unplanned pregnancy instead.

"Her partner was emotionally unstable and did not want her to keep the child. Kelley was caught between a failed marriage, a failed relationship with her baby's father, and the uncertain future of a baby she hadn't planned for. Abortion seemed like the only way out—**until she encountered God's love**.

"When Kelley called the number for Care Net's *Pregnancy Decision Line*, she found a coach ready to remind her of the love of God. A love not based on her circumstances, not hindered by her mistakes and poor choices, but rooted in His unchanging nature. The coach listened as Kelley shared her belief that God existed, but that abortion may be necessary in this circumstance. As the coach probed deeper, Kelley realized that she didn't believe God *wanted* her to abort her baby. The more she talked with her coach, the more she realized that she needed to take a step of obedience and faith in God's love for her *and* her baby.

"She decided she would not have an abortion!

"Every day, thousands of women and men face unexpected—or unexpectedly complicated—pregnancies and the debilitating shame that often accompanies them. Like Kelley, they are desperate to encounter a tangible presentation of God's love....

"God's love brings not just salvation, but transformation. Enabling women like Kelley to find more than life for their unborn children, but also abundant life for their families" (emphases in the original).♥

LIFEWATCH PREACHERS AND SERMONS OVER THE YEARS: 1989-2018

As you might expect, the Lifewatch Service of Worship, which is held every year in January in Washington, DC, includes an annual Lifewatch Sermon. This has been going on since 1989. Below is the complete list, to date, of Lifewatch preachers and their sermon titles. The Lifewatch community is grateful to each of the following women and men, who served the Word of God with faithfulness and boldness during Lifewatch Services of Worship.

1989 Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth/"The Woman at the Well"

1990 Rev. Joyce Bryson/"To Fulfill the Law"

1991 Mr. Steven Paul Wissler/"Men of the City"

1992 Rev. Connie Alt/"The Mother of All Battles"

1993 Rev. Paul R. Crikelair/"New Vision"

1994 Dr. Michael J. Gorman/"Who Is My Neighbor?"

1995 Rev. John Brown/"Keeping Our Balance"

1996 Mrs. Marilyn N. Anderes/"A Meditation"

1997 Rev. Bill Hughes/"Who Will Speak Up for the Little Ones?"

1998 Rev. Marc Rogers/"Bobbi & Kenny/Mary & Joseph"

1999 Rev. Dan White/"Being the Good Samaritan to the Mother and the Child"

2000 Rev. Paul R. Crikelair/"Who Are You?"

2001 Rev. Harold D. Lewis, Sr./"I'm a Miracle, Not a Mistake"

2002 Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth/"Called to Be Saints Together"

2003 Dr. Sondra Wheeler/"Fighting Like Christians"

2004 Dr. Leicester R. Longden/"Complaint, Confession, and Confidence"

2005 Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker/"Do No Harm!"

2006 Dr. R. Kendall Soulen/"Election, Not Selection"

2007 Dr. William J. Abraham/"Striving for Holiness and Peace in a World of Abortions"

2008 Bishop William H. Willimon/"The Pointlessness of Lifewatch"

2009 Dr. Amy Laura Hall/"God's Mischief"

2010 Bishop Scott J. Jones/"The Once and Future Church"

2011 Dr. Edwin King/"This Little Light: We Have to Let It Shine"

2012 Dr. James V. Heidinger II/“The Church and Abortion: Rightly Handling the Word of Truth”

2013 Rev. Frank A. Pavone/“Recall Abortion” [On the fortieth anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the United States Supreme Court decision that overturned all state laws that largely opposed abortion, Lifewatch joined the ecumenical National Memorial for the Pre-Born Service at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, DC.]

2014 Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, Jr./“A Consistent Ethic of Hospitality: Including the Unborn in Our Inclusiveness”

2015 Dr. Edgardo Colon-Emeric/“Life Is Luminous”

2016 Dr. Thomas C. Oden/“The One Who Keeps Watch over Our Souls”

2017 Dr. Stephen W. Rankin/“Winning Strength Out of Weakness”

2018 Dr. David F. Watson/“What Are Human Beings?”♥

TWO STEPS BACK: THE PROPOSED SOCIAL PRINCIPLES REVISION

by Cindy Evans

When the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) presented its draft of the revised Social Principles, GBCS invited United Methodists to “weigh in on the content,” asking if its revision of the Social Principles is “more succinct, more theologically grounded, and more globally relevant” than the original. As a life-long Methodist laywoman who participated in the January 23-24, 2015, Social Principles Consultation in Washington, DC, which was part of the revision-writing process, I make the following observations about the “Nurturing Community” section of the revised Social Principles.

SUCCINCT

If succinct was the goal, then GBCS succeeded. To be specific, the proposed changes have excluded—absolutely written out!—two categories of people from God’s good creation: the unborn, and those who regret having had, encouraged, or participated in abortion.

THEOLOGICALLY GROUNDED

The “Nurturing Community” section of the Social Principles begins by stating that “[e]ach person is formed in the image of God and endowed by God with intrinsic worth.” Throughout the “Nurturing Community” section, the word “all” is used 28 times, among them: “all are invited to participate,” “all are able to flourish in healthy and positive ways,” “God loves all children and therefore, the dignity of all children is to be protected and valued,” “[w]e affirm that all persons are created in the image of God,” and “we affirm that God is present in the beginning and end of mortal life, and in all circumstances of life and death.”

Ironically, not one of these 28 “all” phrases and statements is included in the “Reproductive Health” section of the proposed Social Principles. In that section, the universal (or “all”) takes a break. Evidently, GBCS does not actually believe that “each person is formed in the image of

God and endowed by God with intrinsic worth.” After all, what is the unborn, if not a “person?” A starfish? A cat? A tree? A unicorn? What is the unborn fetus if not a person in the earliest stages of her/his growth and development, a developing human being?

Between 1973, when Roe v. Wade was handed down, and today, science has made significant and substantial discoveries in pre-natal development and medical treatment. Ultrasounds, three-dimensional imaging, and pre-natal surgery clearly demonstrate that what was once considered merely a “blob of tissue” is indeed a human child in the mother’s womb. That is natural and scientific truth, not personal opinion. The only distinction between the preborn and the born is the location of the developing human being. (See <http://www.breakpoint.org/2018/02/breakpoint-pro-life-pro-science/>, accessed 7/5/18.)

Nor are all “invited to participate in the process of growth in community,” where “all are able to flourish....” Based on the proposed text, GBCS believes the unborn is “endowed,” has “intrinsic worth,” and may “participate in community” only if the woman carrying her/him decides to allow the little one to be born. She alone has god-like power to decide whether or not that person will survive the fetal development stages and be born.

The revision is problematic in other ways. While some women who have abortions never think about it again, some post-abortive women (and others involved in the decision-making and/or action) later have regrets. Whether that percentage is 2%, 95%, or somewhere in between, should not United Methodists be providing help and ministry to anyone whose past abortion brings personal crisis and chaos? By expunging “Ministry with Those Who Have Experienced an Abortion” (Paragraph 161L) from the proposed new Social Principles, GBCS announces that the church does not care about them, their troubles, or their emotional and mental health following abortion. That attitude is exactly the opposite of the truly compassionate understanding of Jesus Christ, who calls us to serve and help “the least of these” (Matthew 25). He does not permit us to determine or decide who is worthy of our attention. He simply requires us to serve others, “all” others.

The rewritten Social Principles rightly decry “sexual violence and exploitation,” yet they promote abortion on demand. Human-trafficking victims and child-abuse victims are especially vulnerable and susceptible to abortion as another form of “sexual violence and exploitation,” because their pimps and perpetrators can “destroy the evidence” of their crimes simply by taking them for abortions. Planned Parenthood knows this, and it helps cover up crimes by willingly performing abortions on these victims despite prohibitive laws. (See <http://www.lifenews.com/2018/05/30/planned-parenthood-caught-doing-abortions-on-12-year-old-girls-not-reporting-sexual-assault-to-authorities/>, accessed 7/17/18.) By promoting unrestricted abortion, those responsible for the revised Social Principles are actually allowing and encouraging sexual violence and exploitation of vulnerable women and girls.

The proposed Social Principles state, “We thus decry bullying in all its forms.” They further declare, “We implore

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

persons in positions [of authority] to intervene to take actions that protect those who are bullied and address the root causes of bullying.” What are sexual exploitation and abortion, if not bullying? Again, Christ calls His followers to care for “the least of these.” Scripture also warns Christians that those in positions of authority will be held to a higher standard than those they lead and serve. (See James 3:1.) This applies to parents (including abusive fathers and mothers and other authority figures, such as counselors and pastors), including us, when we ignore, approve, and encourage exploitive, abusive, or sinful behaviors. By promoting abortion as the solution to many problems resulting from sexual behaviors, these revised Social Principles condemn make United Methodists co-conspirators. (Galatians 6:7)

Instead, The United Methodist Church should be acting like the Body of Christ. And United Methodists should be caring for “the least of these.” We should be teaching moral and compassionate behavior starting with children. We all should be training children, starting with ours, in the sacredness and proper use of sex, within the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. (See <http://www.matthewxviii.org/>, accessed 7/21/18.) We all should be walking alongside women and girls with unintended pregnancies, helping and encouraging them for as long as it takes to get their lives—and the lives of their children—back on track. These proposed Social Principles encourage sinful behaviors by the powerful (physically and politically) against the smaller and weaker—men against women and girls who become pregnant as a result of their actions; and women and girls who, willingly or under duress, exert power over their unborn children through induced abortion.

GLOBALLY RELEVANT

The proposed revision of The Nurturing Community section may be acceptable to countries in the western world, where abortion on demand is already common. However, in much of the world, there are other, more pressing needs for families and communities to survive and thrive. Fresh water, basic subsistence farming techniques, basic literacy, personal-hygiene and healthcare education, and disease prevention (such as the “Nothing But Nets” program)—as well as the “bread of life” and “living water” that are the Gospel of Jesus Christ—are all the more important to people who struggle daily to survive. Importing abortion and so-called “comprehensive sex education” into cultures where the very presence of children is considered a great blessing is, as some have charged, “cultural imperialism.” (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsOwslxJcLo>, accessed 7/17/18.)

Who are we, in the western world, to decide for them what is best for them? All people do not want another culture to impose itself on their own culture. So GBCS should not attempt to impose a progressive-western culture on other cultures.

AN ALTERNATIVE?

These are some of the problems with The Nurturing Community section of the proposed Social Principles. What alternative can be proposed?

**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND
THESE ANNUAL EVENTS, WHICH WILL
TAKE PLACE ON
JANUARY 18, 2019 (FRIDAY), AT
THE UNITED METHODIST BUILDING
100 MARYLAND AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC.**

**9:30 a.m. LIFEWATCH SERVICE OF
WORSHIP**

**Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker (ret.)
Former Episcopal Leader of the Florida Area
of The United Methodist Church**

3:00 p.m. LIFEWATCH BOARD MEETING

**ORGANIZE A GROUP FROM YOUR CHURCH
TO ATTEND!**

Of the six consultations hosted by GBCS to revise the Social Principles, only two were held in the United States. Looking back, I cannot help but wonder if this entire process was nothing more than political posturing designed to give the appearance of dialogue while simply arriving at a predetermined, preferred outcome. At the very least, the current Paragraph 161K on “Abortion” and Paragraph 161L on “Ministry with Those Who Have Experienced an Abortion” should be included and remain as currently written. Omitting these paragraphs does not promote “nurturing,” “healthcare,” “justice,” or the Church’s merciful, truthful mission; it promotes the opposite.♥
Mrs. Evans is the Lifewatch Administrator in Cottleville, MO.

FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE WAY FORWARD

On November 11, 2018, Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth presented a version of the following at Edenton United Methodist Church in Raleigh, NC. This presentation was part of a series of evening programs entitled “A Way Forward: General Conference 2019/An ESUMC Conversation.”

It is a high honor to be with all of you this afternoon. Rev. Bob Bauman, thank you for the invitation. Rev. Laurie Hays Coffman and Mr. Sam Isley (and Mr. C.A. Dillon, now in the Communion of the Saints!), thank you for your faithful participation in The Unity Dialogue (on the Church and Homosexuality) in the North Carolina Conference for more than 20 years.

Forgive me for recalling an event. On February 10, 1992, in what was then called the Cokesbury-Isley Room of the Edenton Street Church, a conference on The Durham

Declaration: To United Methodists on Our Church and Abortion took place. Dr. Stanley Hauerwas, Bishop William Willimon, Dr. Michael Gorman, and 35 other clergy and laity took part in the conference.

In 1992, a topic discussed at the Edenton Street Church was life and abortion. In 2018, a topic discussed here is human sexuality.

THREE STORIES

Last month my wife Marsha and I returned to Kansas to attend a reunion of our high-school Class of 1968. On Friday evening of the reunion weekend, I wore—and this will not surprise you!—a clerical collar. That symbol of the Church probably helped determine the conversations I would have that evening.

After registering, I entered the hall. A 1968er approached, introduced herself, and told me her story. Fifty years ago, we barely knew of each other. Even so, at the reunion, she joyfully volunteered her story. Her high-school graduation had been followed by study at the local community college. Intimate with a junior-college athlete, she became pregnant. She moved out of town, resided in a home for unwed mothers, welcomed life and birth, and gave her child to adoptive parents. Decades passed. Without warning, the long-lost son found his mother. That mother-and-child reunion brought ecstatic joy to both. Why did this woman—as a young, unmarried mother—decide to give life to her child? Because the Church had taught her of the humanity, and the dignity, of unborn children; and the Church offered God’s forgiveness for sins. The Church had informed, and formed, her.

Late that same evening of the reunion, a couple volunteered their story. The two were girlfriend and boyfriend during high school. Late in high school, she became pregnant. According to written policy, she was promptly dismissed from school. In short order, her boyfriend also left school, married his girlfriend, and went to work to support his new wife and child. They enjoyed decades of marriage and received additional children. At our fiftieth reunion, they won the award for having the longest marriage! (This is God, once again, bringing great good out of less-than-optimal beginnings.) Why did that young man, back in the late 1960s, leave school and provide for his family? Because the Church had taught young men to be faithful husbands and attentive fathers; and the Church offered God’s forgiveness for sins. The Church had informed, and formed, young people.

Another couple was at the reunion. Each had graduated from high school and began dating in college. It was the late 1960s, and a sexual revolution was stirring. Often fueled by excessive drinking, they caved in to the common license of the time. At a young age, they married, later received children, and lived a good life together. How did that happen? Because the Church taught and practiced Christian truth about marriage; and the Church offered God’s forgiveness for sins. The Church informed, and formed, its own.

JESUS’ TEACHING IS FOUNDATIONAL

In these three brief stories, the Church and her teaching play a strong role. The Church stands firm. The Church

steadfastly teaches what she has been given to teach about life, marriage, and sexuality. The Church does not make up, or stitch together, this teaching. She receives this teaching from Jesus Christ, from the Apostles, from the Church through the centuries.

The Church, from the beginning, has been challenged, by its own Scripture and doctrine, to give single-minded attention to Jesus Christ. After the Transfiguration of our Lord on the mountaintop, a voice (God the Father’s) from a cloud declares: “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5, NRSV here and below) On Matthew’s “listen to him [that is, to Jesus Christ],” John Wesley comments: “As superior even to Moses and the prophets.” (Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament)

At the Cana-of-Galilee wedding, Mary, the mother of Jesus, challenges the servants of the wedding: “Do whatever he tells you.” (John 2:5)

Issuing the Great Commission, Jesus Himself states: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Scripture, time after time, warns the Church to hear and to heed, to trust and obey, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Church at its best gives singular, rapt attention when Jesus describes marriage in response to a question about divorce: “...from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Mark 10:6-9) One man. One woman. One flesh. This is what the Church has taught through the ages, and now teaches, about marriage and human sexuality.

The Church teaches this, most importantly, to be faithful to Jesus Christ. The United Methodist Church’s doctrines are emphatic on this matter: in the Church, “the pure Word of God is preached” (Article XIII of The Articles of Religion); and the Church is “under the Lordship of Christ” and is “the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached...” (Article V of The Confession of Faith). The Church teaches this, also, to be faithful to the Apostles and the Apostolic Tradition. The Church teaches this, finally, to help people to flourish and to protect the weak from the strong; remember the three stories sketched above.

CHURCH CONTROLS OR TRUSTS

Based on good intentions, some United Methodists want to relativize Church teaching on marriage and sexuality, to turn it over to choice. In the One Church Plan, these choices would allow all laity, all clergy, all congregations, and all annual conferences to do what they prefer on matters related to marriage and human sexuality. All these choices are offered under the banner of The United Methodist Church remaining “One Church.” The goal of the One Church Plan—the unity of the church—is laudable. However, to reach its goal, the One Church Plan adjusts or alters or reduces the church’s teaching to make it maximally acceptable to the

greatest number of United Methodists (and non-United Methodists). This is an instance of a church attempting to seize control of its own faith and life, and make changes in its doctrine and discipline that it thinks necessary, so that it can avoid the worst-case scenario and cross into an alleged promised land. As modern science often attempts to control nature, such management of a church tries to control its future, to reach an optimal future.

A better way forward for The United Methodist Church involves: trusting God, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit; receiving the teaching revealed through Scripture and confirmed by the Church through the ages; and preaching, teaching, and practicing what has been received, so that it might be handed on to the saints who follow.

A church, unsure and conflicted, strategizes and controls for the best outcome. A church, at its most faithful, trusts and obeys God in all things.

LAST WORD

Many in The United Methodist Church—including bishops and clergy and laity, liberals and evangelicals, progressives and orthodox—desire more than anything else for The United Methodist Church to become a conflict-free zone. That will never happen. If history is a good teacher, then in the Church, including The United Methodist Church, conflict there will always be. The Church proposing the Gospel, of the Bible and the Apostles, always stirs it up—inside its own household and with the world outside. United Methodists, we need to get used to standing up for the Church’s faith, even when that is not welcome. God will help us.♥

“I NEED YOU TO BELIEVE SO THAT I CAN BELIEVE”

Mrs. Eileen Smith belongs to St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wayne, NJ, and she serves as a deacon there. She writes compellingly about faith and the Church: “My pastor, Robert Mountenay, once quoted his former professor, Dr. Eric Gritsch [1931-2012, Lutheran theologian], as saying, ‘I need you to believe so that I can believe.’ Pastor Mountenay said that he didn’t understand this at first, but later came to appreciate that faith is born, nurtured, and grows in community. I appreciate this as well for when I feel that God has turned a deaf ear to me, when I struggle with his existence in the face of his apparent silence, when I lie awake at night and wonder, ‘what if,’ I place myself in the hand of the community and rely on their faith to keep my faith intact. Every Sunday I join in community to hear the word and receive the sacrament, and even on those days when I’m weary and I’m simply going through the motions, I know the community is carrying me through, even if I don’t always feel it—and even though they don’t realize it. As we share in the cup of wine, Christ’s blood, we not only share in the drink of remission of sins but we drink from the cup of Christ’s sufferings, of our own suffering, of the suffering of one another bound together in community and we are strengthened by this grace.”

ABORTION AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Mrs. Smith moves on to matters that are challenges in the churches today: “I was once asked to keep in prayer a woman who, near the end of her pregnancy, was told that her child would be born with a physical complication that would necessitate immediate surgery. When her child, Christina Grace, was delivered, it was discovered her health issues were far greater than anticipated. Christina spent the first and only year of her life in the hospital undergoing treatments and surgeries. I have a picture of Christina Grace shortly before her death in the arms of her mother, smiling, trusting. Her parents chose as the final hymn at her funeral, ‘Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation.’ In this hymn they proclaimed what they believed—that God had not abandoned their daughter, that God would never abandon them. Their words and actions spoke to their faith.

“A month later I attended my first synod assembly in the ELCA [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America] having previously been a member of the LCMS [Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod]. We debated a resolution that called for the funding of abortions in the church’s medical plan. The conversation devolved from a theological discussion into one that was ‘me directed’ with issues such as wondering why we should bring an unwanted child, or a child with health issues, into the world. Nurses spoke with great empathy for children born with health issues, suggesting it would be better had they not been born at all. Others spoke to a child being born into a home that wasn’t prepared to nurture a child. My mind was filled with the image of Christina, smiling up at her mother and of her mother cherishing this time with her child knowing that these moments were coming to an end. Framing the discussion through the lens of this photo, I wondered: do we believe? Has Christ conquered suffering or should we take action to ensure our happiness? What it comes down to is simply, do we believe in the resurrection?

“We have gone on to debate other issues that we are faced with in our culture today, perhaps most prominently the issue of homosexuality which led us to deviate from the teachings of the church to establish a new order for ministry. In that time I attended many synod assemblies. In all the debates around this issue, I heard little scriptural justification; rather folks argued for a decision that would allow us to carry out God’s will that we be happy. One wonders if this ‘me-directed’ happiness is lasting.”

A PLEA TO PASTORS

“I spoke on the occasion of my pastor’s 25th anniversary of ordination. A friend, who happens also to be a pastor, said to me, ‘Challenge him.’ I wasn’t comfortable challenging my pastor, nor am I comfortable challenging any pastor who might be reading this piece. What follows is not a challenge, rather a plea.

“I need you to believe so I can believe. Preach and teach God’s word as the treasure it is, handed down from the disciples, the Church Fathers, the reformers. Lead us so that we might be the light of Christ in this world, not part of the darkness. Open yourself up to God’s message—a message of trust, not in ourselves but in the resurrection.

“Proclaim the Easter message and believe that even in the pain of the death of a child, of watching a loved one suffer, of choosing not to engage in relationships that are contrary to scripture, of the isolation that may follow turning one’s back on the culture of the day, of fighting for one’s life, whatever our struggle may be, God will triumph.

“Remind us of sin, death, and the power of the devil. We contend with it every day in our lives. Help us in our confession so that we may experience the sweet taste of absolution.

“Remind us of the great examples of faith—of Abraham who clung to God’s promise that he would be the father of many nations while preparing to sacrifice his son, of Moses who chose to participate in the suffering of his people rather than the luxury of Pharaoh’s court, of the mystics, the martyrs, all those who suffered for their faith, gifting us with a witness that suffering is not the end.

“Even when God seems silent, when I feel as if I’m knocking on a door with only darkness behind it, I live in hope. The community into which I was born that helps me sustain my hope is the community into which you have been placed as shepherd. Let your faith be preached in all your words and in your actions. I need you to believe so I can believe. And you need me to believe for you to believe as well.” (“Marked with the Cross of Christ Forever,” Forum Letter, July 2018, pp. 5-7)♥

CALLING EVIL ACTIONS EVIL: “AN ODD SORT OF MERCY”

Some United Methodists, according to this editor’s keenest observations (?), do not believe that there are human actions that are always evil—or, to be more philosophical about it, are “intrinsically evil” (that is, evil by their very nature). They tend to rationalize or make excuses for actions that others would call intrinsically evil. In “Intrinsic Evil and McCarrick” (8.7.18, <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/08/Intrinsic-evil-and-mccarrick>, accessed on 8/8/18), Dan Hitchens, the deputy editor of The Catholic Herald, lists the everyday justifications some United Methodists casually repeat when commenting on actions that are wrong: “*It’s not that big a deal...Just this once...I need it for my health...Everybody else does it...Why would God care about something so trivial?...My situation’s very unusual, anyway...*”

Hitchens goes on: “Elizabeth Anscombe [1919-2001, British philosopher] gave a lifelong witness to the existence of intrinsic evils—as she put it, ‘the idea that any class of actions, such as murder, may be absolutely excluded.’ She contrasted this with the idea that moral laws are ‘rules of thumb which an experienced person knows when to break.’ Anscombe drew this contrast in reference to Harry Truman’s decision to drop two atomic bombs on Japan. In 1956, she made a lonely protest against Oxford’s honorary degree for Truman. It did not matter, she argued, whether the bombs might have led to a smaller overall loss of life: ‘For men to choose to kill the innocent as a means to their

ends is always murder. That ‘always’ fortified her when majority opinion thought she was foolish....”

“[D]uring the last century the world did lose its mind about sexual morality. Old disciplines were overturned, and the upheaval changed attitudes towards children and young people. In 1970s Britain, for instance, the Paedophile Information Network made great strides towards respectability. Polly Toynbee, the definition of a liberal columnist, has recalled her ‘sinking feeling that in another five years or so, their aims would eventually be incorporated into the general liberal credo, and we would all find them acceptable.’ Across the Atlantic [in the United States], the North American Man/Boy Love Association [NAMBLA] counted among its members Allen Ginsberg, paragon of the ‘60’s counterculture. (The inaugural meeting of what became NAMBLA, incidentally, was attended by Fr. Paul Shanley, a priest later convicted of child rape.)....

“At around the same time, the Church was thrown into turmoil. Among the many novelties of those years was the advance of new moral theories, which shelved the idea of intrinsic evil. These theories proposed that what really matters is whether your heart remains basically open to God; or that your conscience can decide whether a moral law applies.

“The people who came up with these theories were often well intentioned. They were trying to get away from needless inflexibility and cruel judgmentalism. But in discarding Church teaching, they also kicked away a means of support for the vulnerable. Those tempted by suicide, or sexual exploitation, [or abortion,] are not helped by being told that each decision must be discerned in conscience on its own merits. One thing that may help them is to know that a certain choice is definitely the wrong choice, and that God can give them the grace to avoid it.

“In Graham Green’s The End of the Affair, Sarah Miles speaks to a priest and tries to find a loophole so that she can continue her extramarital relationship. ‘Every time I asked him a question I had such hope; it was like opening the shutters of a new house and looking for the view, and every window just faced a blank wall. No, no, no, he said.’

“Sarah walks out and slams the door, reflecting bitterly on the priest’s coldness. It’s God, she thinks, who has mercy. ‘And then I came out of the church and saw the crucifix they have there, and I thought, of course, he’s got mercy, only it’s such an odd sort of mercy, it sometimes looks like punishment.’

“The idea of intrinsic evil may look harsh and punitive. But to those struggling to stay afloat, it can be a lifeline.” (PTS)♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- Your prayers, your emails and letters and calls, and your financial gifts really do maintain and extend Lifewatch’s witness for the Gospel of Life in The United Methodist Church and beyond. You can give a gift to Lifewatch in three ways. First, you can write a check to “Lifewatch and sent it to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338. Second, you can give stocks by first contacting Mrs. Cindy

Evans in the Lifewatch office. And third, if you are over the age of 70-1/2, you may give a gift from your IRA as a tax-free distribution. (This means a gift [up to \$100,000...!] can be transferred from your IRA directly to Lifewatch and can count toward your minimum required distribution without being considered as taxable income.) If you are contemplating an IRA gift, please first communicate with Mrs. Evans in the Lifewatch office. Mrs. Evans and I are deeply grateful for your support of all kinds. (PTS)

- To date, I have not seen the movie “GOSNELL: The Trial of America’s Biggest Serial Killer.” (Dr. Kermit Gosnell, you will remember, is the notorious, law-breaking, Philadelphia abortionist, who is now behind bars.) But I intend to—even if I have to buy the DVD. I understand it contains no graphic visuals, is well constructed and acted, and focuses on the facts of the case as tried.

- Not long ago an unsolicited copy of Abortion Worldwide Report: 1 Century, 100 Nations, 1 Billion Babies/The History, Policies and Sacred Accounting, and the Means to Restore Protection of Human Life (GLC Publications, 2018), which is edited by Thomas W. Jacobson and William Robert Johnston, arrived here. This large, handsome, paperback book is filled to overflowing with international data related to abortion. To order your print (or eBook) copy for \$40.00, go to www.GLCPublications.com.

- The Great Debate—on church unity, human sexuality, and General Conference 2019—continues in The United Methodist Church. Most United Methodists lament that. But as a matter of fact, The Great Debate can bring out the very best from some United Methodist laity and clergy. It has definitely generated good from the ministry of Rev. Gary E. Crum. Rev. Crum, a licensed local pastor in the Holston Conference, has published Mending the Methodist Fray: Tailoring a Resolution to The United Methodist Church’s Same-Sex Debate (Xulon Press, 2018). This concise book—

actually a lengthy, engaging essay—supports a traditional resolution of The Great Debate. Along the way, he quotes John Wesley, Martin Luther, Jeremy Bentham (!), and The Book of Discipline. His reliance on God’s revelation is particularly welcome, and needed, today. In preparing as a participant in (or observer of) General Conference 2019, you would benefit from ordering a copy of this book (from the usual places) and reading it.

- Father Alexander Schmemmann [1921-1983] was a world-class Orthodox theologian. That is demonstrated in his book The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983 (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000). For example, he wrote: “I read a little book by Bishop Paul Moore [1919-2003; The Episcopal Church’s Bishop of New York from 1972 to 1989]—the explanation of his ordination of a lesbian to the priesthood. In a way, it is an extraordinary book, extraordinary as a witness to the radical transformation of Christian love into something quite different, literally quite opposite. The author does not see, does not understand that if Christian love were what he makes it to be, the whole Christian teaching, the whole Gospel would be totally meaningless. The question is essentially about the earthly happiness of man, i.e., not about man’s denial of self for the sake of a new life, but on the contrary, about Christianity as a method of self-acceptance. Even the enemies of Bishop Moore do not see it. For them, there is good sex and bad sex (homosexuality). They do not understand that in the area of sex, we deal with the fallen world, so that Moore seems to be defending love against moralists and Pharisees. People do not understand that grace liberates us, before anything else, from ourselves, from our enslavement by flesh and blood (‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,’ Galatians 2:20). Here [in Moore’s understanding], Christianity is the affirmation of the natural man with all his lust.... Amazing that people of Moore’s type, educated

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theologians, simply do not see this radical substitution.” (pp. 224-225)

● During the Annual Prayer Breakfast at this year’s National Right to Life Convention, Archbishop Joseph Naumann spoke. His excellent, stirring, inspiring speech included the following spoof, from “Jordan Management Consultants” to “Jesus, Son of Joseph” on the “Resumes of Apostles.” It reads:

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational-aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits

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of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture. (<https://bible.org/illustration/resumes-apostles>)

● *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* “Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail.” ♥

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