

THANK YOU . . . AND PLEASE CONSIDER THIS

Many, many thanks to those of you who have, once again, given so generously to support Lifewatch's witness for life within The United Methodist Church. Your sacrificial generosity is gladly acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

Each year nearly 150 people give to support our ministry. If another 50—just 50!—gave to strengthen our witness for life, it would be on a much firmer financial footing to move forward. These additional gifts would free us from undue concern about finances and free us for the work of ministry.

If you have not given to Lifewatch in the last year, or if you have never given to Lifewatch, please consider giving in the next couple of weeks. And please consider becoming a regular donor. Small and large gifts—of \$5 per quarter, \$5 per month, or \$100 per month—would be extremely helpful to our ongoing witness.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration and for your faithfulness. —Editor

ON THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE

On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court handed down Roe v. Wade. This one Supreme Court decision knocked down all state laws on abortion, legally established abortion on demand in American society, and literally demoralized many of the churches in America with regard to abortion. January 22, 1973 was a sad day, for it legally and morally made possible the 55 million abortions performed in America during the next forty years.

On January 25, 2013, hundreds of thousands of

people—mostly young—gathered in Washington, DC to recall the 40th anniversary of Roe and to march for life. The mood of the gathering and the march was especially festive and joyful. January 25 of this year was a hopeful day, for it celebrated the God-given gift of life and looked forward to the day when each unborn child would be more protected by law and more welcomed by parents and others.

Forty years ago, the Roman Catholic bishops stood nearly alone in their public witness to protest Roe and to warn of its massive consequences. On January 25th of this year, bishops, priests, and pastors from tens of denominations in the United States gathered for common prayer at the National Memorial for the Pre-Born and Their Mothers and Fathers service at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. (Please read the sermon of the service below.) This ecumenical event displayed the Christian unity God gives and inspires.

Forty years ago, The United Methodist Church was busy assisting in the formation of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR), which is now called the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). Within United Methodism, there was no witness for life. Now, Lifewatch exists and regularly witnesses to the Gospel of Life. And within United Methodism, the Confessing Movement, Good News, and UMAction speak up for life as well.

Forty years ago, abortion rights had much political and cultural momentum, and seemed nearly unopposed. Today, the Pro-Life Movement, in its many dimensions, is a powerful force in American culture and politics.

Forty years ago, public opinion was predominantly pro-choice. Now, a majority of Americans identify themselves as pro-life.

In general, 40 years ago, with regard to life and abortion, was a time of great sadness. Fifty-five million lost children, in the United States alone, is indeed catastrophic. Nevertheless, now is a time of much hope. Thanks be to God and God's providence. —PTS♥

2013 SERMON:

"RECALL ABORTION"

by Reverend Frank A. Pavone

Reverend clergy, elected officials, and brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus Christ is Lord!

We are here to recall something this morning, and to do so in unity across the Body of Christ.

We are here to recall the powerful works of God and the destructive work of abortion—to call it to our own minds, and to call it to the minds of others. And we are here to demand a recall of abortion—to take off the shelves a faulty product and a failed promise, and to banish it from our nation forever!

WE STAND IN UNITY

We stand in unity this morning. We recall the great truths that we all affirm together. We stand on those truths, and we proclaim them to the world.

We are here to recall our need for God. We recall our sins, our emptiness, and the fact that we cannot save ourselves.

We recall God's mighty deeds in Christ.

We stand in unity today, and we proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is only One who has dominion over human life and death, and His name is Jesus Christ. There is only One who is the hope of humanity, the Savior of all, the source of justice, and the essence of peace; and His name is Jesus Christ.

We stand in unity today, and we proclaim that in Jesus Christ God has become one of us, has humbled Himself to share in our humanity, and has died for our sins.

We stand in unity today, and we proclaim that there was a day when an angel rolled a stone away from a tomb and revealed it to be empty. We proclaim that Jesus Christ broke the bonds of death and rose victorious from the grave. And in so doing, He not only destroyed His death, but ours. He overturned the entire kingdom of death, and therefore He overturned the power of abortion.

We stand in unity today, and we proclaim that He will come again, on a day nobody knows, and every eye will see Him, even the eyes of those who pierced Him!

We recall today who we are in Him.

The great battle for the sanctity of life is not simply about when life begins; it is about the fundamental questions of who we are and Whose we are. In Jesus Christ, we not only see the Father, but also see ourselves. He reveals to us the eternal God, and He reveals to us the meaning of our own humanity. As He told us in today's Gospel passage from John, "On that day, you will have

no further questions to ask me." (16:23a)

In revealing us to ourselves, Christ reveals who we are to one another—brothers and sisters, whose lives have been entrusted to one another by the Creator. We are our brother's keepers!

We believe and proclaim that Jesus Christ exalts human life to His throne. Our destiny, as spoken by our Lord in Revelation 3:21, is to sit with Him on His throne! That is how much He loves human life!

And that is why the Church cannot turn the other way when that same human life is thrown in the garbage.

We cannot credibly announce the Gospel to the world if we are ignoring abortion or tolerating it in any way.

We recall abortion today.

We recall the most destructive decision and costly error ever made by a human authority, the Roe v. Wade decision.

We recall what abortion is, because in Christ we have the courage to both face the truth and call things by their proper names.

We recall, and must recall to others, what the abortionists themselves admit about abortion, that it is dismemberment and decapitation, that it tears children apart and brings out their skulls in fragments rather than as a unified piece.

Brothers and sisters, if abortion can be called right, if it can in the least way be tolerated, then...

We are not our brothers' keepers after all!

We are not made in the image of God!

We are not called to serve!

If abortion can be tolerated, if it is anything less than an absolute wrong, then...

Justice is not just!

Truth is not true!

Love is not effective!

Christ is not on His throne!

And God is not God!

But as it is, God is God, and Christ is on His throne, and therefore we are our brothers' keepers, and abortion is the greatest violation of human solidarity, justice, love, and peace.

THE GOSPEL IS THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, moreover, that we proclaim in response to this evil. Jesus Christ not only brings us the Gospel; He is the Gospel! And as He told us in many ways, He is Life itself.

Therefore, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of God's love for humanity, and the Gospel of Life are one and the same, unique, indivisible Gospel. The message we proclaim about life and against abortion is not something added onto the Gospel or the Church's proclamation of it; rather, it is part and parcel of the Gospel itself.

A church silent about abortion is a church silent about the Gospel.

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

It has been said that the world is tearing up the photos of what it means to be human, but the Church is keeping the negatives!

The Pro-Life Movement arose not primarily as a response to Roe v. Wade, but as a response to Jesus Christ. That response is the same dynamic through which we see Christians through the centuries rescuing children who had been abandoned in the Roman Empire, establishing schools, hospitals, and missions for the needy, saving slaves, and fighting segregation.

And the circumstances of our time demand another particular incarnation, if you will, an expression and manifestation of this fundamental Christian response: the movement that works to end abortion and restore full protection to children in the womb.

It has been 40 years since that protection was completely deprived from every unborn child in America. The plaintiff of Roe, Norma McCorvey, who sends her prayerful greetings to our gathering today, now works with us to end abortion.

REMEMBRANCE AND THE JOURNEY

We look back today over these 40 years, and we recall our journey, just as the nation recently recalled the journey of the Civil Rights Movement. We welcome to this service, in light of that, Dr. Alveda King, niece of Martin Luther King, Jr. and full-time director of African-American Outreach for Priests for Life.

Forty years, of course, represents the length of a generation, and the amount of time it took the Israelites to journey to the promised land after having been set free from Egypt. The journey, however, did not have to take 40 years. The Book of Deuteronomy tells us it would have taken only 11 days! The problem, as Scripture reminds us, is that the Israelites failed to trust, and they failed to trust because so often they failed to recall. Too easily, and far too often, they forgot. They forgot His mighty deeds. They forgot His mighty promises, His reliability, and His faithfulness. And this forgetfulness led to grumbling, division, and even the temptation to choose others leaders and go back to Egypt!

This is why, in our Christian faith, recall plays such a crucial role. Do not forget the works of the Lord! This, of course, is at the heart of the Passover ritual, where the history of God's mighty power is recalled in detail.

This remembrance is also at the heart of the Lord's Supper: Do this is remembrance of Me.

Even in the secular life of our nation, we acknowledge the need to remember both the pain and the glory of key events: Never forget!, we declare, in regard to days like September 11 and Pearl Harbor Day.

“The Pro-Life Movement arose not primarily as a response to Roe v. Wade, but as a response to Jesus Christ. That response is the same dynamic through which we see Christians through the centuries rescuing children...”

And so we remember the sad day of Roe v. Wade, and we remember our own pro-life journey. It is appropriate today to remember what initially got us involved in the Pro-Life Movement, what troubled us so much about abortion that we felt we had to get involved in fighting it. It helps us to recall the troubles we have had in doing what is right, for

those troubles too are a fulfillment of what we have heard in this Gospel passage: “You will have trouble in the world; but have courage, I have overcome the world!” (John 16:33)

And what we have recalled to ourselves, we recall to others. We speak. We hand on our testimony. The transmission of the Christian faith through the centuries has, in fact, been a history of testimony. Jesus is the testimony of the Father. Paul hands on his testimony of conversion. And so it continues through the centuries, as Augustine hands on his confessions and countless others cry out, Do not forget the works of the Lord!

That is why one of the most powerful aspects of the Pro-Life Movement today, and one of the most prominent aspects of the events of this day, is the Silent No More Awareness Campaign. We have seen here, earlier in this service, the testimony of a man and woman who recall their abortion, and recall the saving power of Jesus Christ.

The power of this witness will be repeated today in Washington and tomorrow at the Walk for Life in San Francisco. At both events, coordinated by the co-founders of the Campaign, Janet Morana and Georgette Forney, men and women who know the pain of abortion and the power of Christ will share their experience publicly. They will recall what has happened, and they will demand a recall of the destructive procedure that they were deceived into buying. And their voices are being heard, as the Campaign provides them a platform at these marches, on the Internet and social networking, on television and radio, and in churches and legislative hearings.

The evidence comes to us daily of the hearts and minds changed, and lives saved, thanks to these testimonies. Indeed, we remember the works of the Lord, and the sorrow we have is turned into joy.

CHURCH, RISE UP!

Therefore, the Christian Church must rise up to meet this hour. We must rise up, we must speak up, we must act up.

We must make it clear to those in our midst who are tempted to abort their children that we recall them, that we recall their confusion and despair, and are ready to meet it with compassion and hope.

We must make it clear to those in our midst who every day recall the child they aborted and recall their

grief and pain, that we recall them, too, and that we have good news for them, that we have someone to introduce them to, that we have a Savior who lifts us up out of the darkest sin, and that his name is Jesus Christ.

We must recall mothers and fathers and families to their original dignity.

We must recall to their proper status the children in the womb.

We must recall the medical profession to its proper and noble role: healers of life, not takers of life.

We must recall the government to its fundamental role: to protect the rights God has given us, not to be god over us.

We must recall public servants to their fundamental duties. We need public servants who know the difference between serving the public and killing the public. And if they don't, they do not belong in public office.

In particular, we, as the Church of Jesus Christ, address today a solemn call to repentance, a call to all who serve in public office and have tolerated and supported abortion. A call to the Republican Party to live out more courageously and consistently the words of its platform concerning the right to life of the unborn. A call to the Democratic Party to change the words of its platform regarding the unborn, to stop promoting child-killing as a right, and to return to its roots and truly stand up for the poorest of the poor, the weakest of the weak, the most marginalized of the marginalized, the child in the womb! A call to the President of the United States to change his position from one that supports and promotes abortion to one that acknowledges and supports our youngest neighbors. A call to our government at every level: hear the voices of those who recall their abortion, who share their testimony with us, and recall abortion; take it off the market, rid America of this failed and destructive product, this false and empty promise.

We must recall the churches to their role and duty to both announce good and denounce evil, and to reclaim the confidence that the Lord places in us by telling us He has overcome the world, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. That is not simply about the Church withstanding attacks. It is about the Church taking the initiative against the culture of death, and causing its gates to fall.

We recall the Church to her duty to proclaim that abortion is the very opposite of love. Love says, "I sacrifice myself for the good of the other person." Abortion says, "I sacrifice the other person for the good of myself." And isn't it amazing that the very same words used by the culture of death to justify abortion are the words used by our Lord to proclaim life and salvation and love: This is my body!

THE SACRIFICES REQUIRED

We call the Church to acknowledge, furthermore, the sacrifice it is going to take to end abortion. We have been

promised trouble in this world, and we know trouble comes when we address abortion. When we speak about abortion in the churches, we're told it's too political. When we speak about it in politics, we're told it's too religious. In the world of media, the topic is too disturbing. In the world of business, it's too distracting. In the world of education, it's too controversial. In the streets, it's too disruptive. So if abortion is wrong, where do we go to say so? We go into the churches, into politics, into the media, into the business world, into education, and into the streets!

Over these 40 years, some churches didn't want to rescue or get too political, because they didn't want to get into a legal hassle with the government. But now, not having taken the fight to the government, they find that the government has taken the fight to them with the HHS mandate [on health insurance coverage of abortifacients, birth control, and sterilization]! And in that regard, we also know our response. We will obey God rather than men!

In the world, we will have trouble. We cannot adjust this battle to fit our lives. We are called to adjust our lives to fit this battle—a battle defined by the fundamental call expressed by St. John: We too are called to lay down our lives for the brethren. (15:13)

And we must do this all in unity. We must go beyond dialogue to biologue—to living out the demands of this hour. We must profess and announce the Christian teaching on life, in ever better and clearer ways, but together we must cross the threshold from teaching to action. We can't just tell people about the war between the culture of death and the culture of life; we have to show them how to fight it, and how to win it.

This is not a message we are to speak simply within our churches. We must reach those who need to hear it, wherever they may be. We must go into the highways and byways and find them, not because we have an invitation, but because we have a commission.

So let's go door to door. Let's combine resources, and break through the ceiling of the advertising world and the major media, and make our presence and our compassion known. Let's map out a plan together. Let's begin meeting together—we are the ones, here in this room—and thinking strategically and mapping out a plan to end abortion.

This is a non-partisan movement. It does not take its birth from, or owe its loyalty to, any political party, but rather insists that every political party be free of the illusion that it can deny the right to life. This is an interdenominational and interreligious movement. It embraces people of every faith background, and even welcomes people of no religious faith who nevertheless embrace the vision of equal protection for every human life. This is a non-violent movement. Bloodshed is never the answer to bloodshed, and respect for life respects also those who set themselves against our beliefs and

purposes. This is a compassionate movement that will bring hands full of hope and hearts full of mercy to all women and men who suffer the temptation to abort or the pain of having done so. This is a diverse movement. There is no age requirement. There are no ethnic boundaries. The movement embraces a wide variety of strategies and tactics, and a kaleidoscope of professional backgrounds and life experiences. Everyone has a role in defending life.

And this is a movement that draws fresh beginnings every day. Some of our brothers and sisters complain that we are still talking about the "same old issue." They're tired of it, and they often cease responding. The same old issue? Is that how we are expected to respond when called to tend to the sick. "This is the same old thing; I've seen it a thousand times." Is this how we respond to a call in the middle of the night to take care of a dying member of the congregation? The fact is that this person has never died before! It's a new tragedy that demands a new response!

And yes, we are called to be inconvenienced, to be disrupted and interrupted. When life is in danger, everything stops and energies coalesce around the saving of that life, because everything else depends on it. At that moment converge the mission to feed the poor, to tend to the sick, to educate the child, to bear witness to the Gospel for that person, to express our solidarity with that person in a thousand ways. At the moment one's life is threatened, our whole calling is to recognize, love, and serve that person whose life is at stake, not just one aspect of it.

I therefore call upon you today, my brothers and sisters, not only to commit yourselves to the mission of ending abortion, but to make the defense of the unborn your priority. And there is no turning back.

When faced with trouble and opposition, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded the civil rights activists that no dogs were going to turn them around, no water hoses were going to turn them around, no police clubs or jail sentences were going to turn them around, and no injunctions were going to turn them around.

And I say today to you in the Pro-Life Movement: no Planned Parenthood is going to turn us around, no biased media is going to turn us around, no HHS mandate is going to turn us around, and no Obama Administration is going to turn us around.

It has been 40 years. The Promised Land is in front of us! And we are going to enter it together! *Rev. Pavone is the national director of Priests for Life and the president of the National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC). His sermon was preached at the National Memorial for the Pre-Born and Their Mothers and Fathers service, which took*

place on January 25, 2013 at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. Rev. Paul R. Crikelair of Stroudsburg, PA and the editor, representing Lifewatch, participated in the leadership of the service.♥

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MIRACLES IN OUR MIDST

This issue of Lifewatch appears between Christmas 2012 and Easter 2013. Both Christmas and Easter involve, among many other things, God-given miracles. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, the unique God-man, who was conceived by the presence of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35); and Easter re-presents the resurrection of Jesus, who was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. During this time of the Christian Year, between the miracle of Christmas and the miracle of Easter, we would be wise to be alert to miracles in our midst.

One of the most obvious miracles in our midst is the Church. Let us put it plainly: the Church lives only because the Holy Spirit gives life to the Church. Were it not for the Spirit, the Church would not exist. No Spirit, no Church. The Church was birthed by the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost Day, and the Church continues to live only because the Spirit gives life to the Christian community. The Apostles' Creed and The Nicene Creed declare the holy, catholic Church to be Spirit-dependent by addressing the Church under the article of belief in the Holy Spirit. Again, the Church is a living, breathing, moving community that lives, breathes, and moves only because of the presence and power of God the Holy Spirit.

In this world, it is a miracle that the Church lives, ministers, and is in mission. There are so many forces arrayed against the Church. For starters, there is the "dictatorship of relativism," as Pope Benedict XVI has put it. Materialism. Consumerism. Random spiritualities. Heresies. Schisms. Scandals within the Church. Governments that are increasingly aggressive against the Christian community. And the list could go on. But still, the Church remains. The Church persists in doing what the Spirit creates and calls her to do.

(In most efforts to address the decline of The United Methodist Church in the United States, the miraculous nature of the Church is overlooked. These efforts seem mostly grounded in the belief that we are ultimately responsible for the Church, that the Church first and finally depends on us. Unfortunately, these well intentioned efforts, founded on faulty theology, lack truthful doctrine and constructive direction.)

There is another, lesser miracle that might be mentioned in passing. That is the ministry of

Lifewatch. Lifewatch has no earthly reason for existing, let alone continuing its witness. Lifewatch is a minority voice for life within The United Methodist Church, which unfortunately has institutional ties with pro-choice forces. Lifewatch lacks official status in our denomination. Lifewatch receives no funds from the larger denomination. Lifewatch is supported by relatively few people. And yet, Lifewatch and its witness continue. The Holy Spirit, for one reason or another, helps Lifewatch to witness for the least of these, year in and year out, in The United Methodist Church.

What can we say? Only this: thanks be to God for miracles, large and small. (PTS) ♥

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: OUR CHALLENGE

Even with all the talk in The United Methodist Church about leadership these days, it is easy to allow the practice of leadership to degenerate into power plays and my-way-or-the-highway attitudes. The ideal of servant leadership rescues the Church's understanding of leadership from these rather debased understandings. Needless to say, servant leadership is needed in faithful witness for life. What follows was written in the spring of 2012.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP FROM JESUS CHRIST

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me..." (John 10:11-14)

"For these persons [that is, church leaders] to lead the church effectively, they must embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership." (The Book of Discipline [2012], Par. 133)

SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOR TODAY

1. Jesus' teaching on "the good shepherd" is generalized by the phrase "servant leadership." The ideal of servant leadership should guide all church leaders—bishops, pastors, and lay leaders—in their ministries and lives. In general, servant leaders are leaders who use their personal, church, and community resources for the honor of the Triune God and the genuine good of others.
2. Servant leadership always requires respect. It never permits a church leader to disrespect one who is led. Indeed, servant leadership requires a church leader, who demeans one of the led, to repent, to apologize, and to reconcile.
3. Servant leadership is always open to critique. It is

never evasive or inaccessible, manipulative or domineering. Leadership that aims only to win its way mistakenly places power and victory over service and ministry.

4. Servant leadership, in deliberative settings, always raises and responds to hard questions. Servant leadership is not heavy handed, nor is it silently subservient. Rather, servant leadership is engaging, encouraging, and critical. **SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN CONFERENCE LIFE**

Over the last several years, many of the institutions of The United Methodist Church have been reformed—often in the name of organizational efficiency or missional advancement. Throughout our denomination's life, it seems that what has been deemed less effective has been reduced or eliminated. Conference newspapers and publications have minimized column inches dedicated to the discussion of the issues of our day. Annual conference sessions seem to have trended toward limiting, not deepening, debate on important matters. Consultation with many seems to have become an afterthought; hurried action by the few seems more common. In committee meetings at various levels of the church, differing opinions often seem to be avoided or squelched in the interest of "peace" and "unity." These changes, by removing signs of friction, make the church appear to operate with increasing organizational and missional effectiveness.

But effectiveness should not be the defining characteristic of our life together. "Christian conferencing" should be definitive for us. But Christian conferencing requires clergy and laity standing up and being responsible and informed, speaking the truth in love for the sake of the common good, at times objecting to popular proposals, and at times affirming unpopular proposals.

Christian conferencing is what servant leaders do in deliberative meetings. Christian conferencing is not a committee chair making a proposal and then the other committee members automatically accepting that proposal without serious challenge. Christian conferencing involves servant leaders engaging in discussion, even civil argument, for the sake of arriving at the best decisions for the church at whatever level.

Only if The United Methodist Church is opened up—so that servant leaders can truly engage in Christian conferencing—will our church be renewed in trusting, and obeying, Jesus Christ. Only if The United Methodist Church is opened up—with much authentic Christian conferencing—will our church increase in trust, truth, and unity. (PTS)♥

LETTERS TO LIFEWATCH

December 23, 2012

Rev. Stallsworth,

I read with interest your comment in "Is the Church a Voluntary Association?" ([Lifewatch](#), December 1, 2012). I have not read the [Good News](#) article your article mentioned.

I found it interesting that you used the language of the current Baptismal Covenant to support your case. I joined the Methodist Church some 45 years ago, and I can assure you that I made no loyalty oath to The United Methodist Church, as it did not exist at that time. Yes, I joined prior to the 1968 merger. Oh, I should mention that my father and grandfather joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, South—which also no longer exists.

So you argue I am to remain loyal to a church that did not exist when I joined and has drastically changed over the past 100 years. I will, if I believe there is a chance to return it to its Biblical roots. But if the day comes when I no longer believe that is possible, I will leave without hesitation. Loyalty is a two-way street; it goes both up and down. (Ask any military commander if you do not believe me.) I have been, and continue to be, loyal to The United Methodist Church. But my loyalty is voluntary, and the time that I feel The United Methodist Church has betrayed my loyalty, I will leave without reservation.

Sincerely,

James A. Blagg/Doe Hill, VA

Response:

In his thoughtful letter, Mr. Blagg probably speaks for most United Methodists. He makes two excellent points.

First, he personally notes the messiness of American denominationalism. With regard to American Methodism, there was indeed a Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which had its baptismal vows; and there was the Methodist Church, which had its baptismal vows; and now there is The United Methodist Church, which has its Baptismal Covenant vows. There were indeed the mergers of 1939 and 1968. The important question Mr. Blagg presses is this: Exactly which set of vows should hold sway for one who has belonged to more than one of these denominations? This pastor would propose that the set of baptismal vows, of the denomination to which one currently belongs, should be observed. Therefore, those of us who are currently United Methodists should, with God's grace, strive to obey the vows contained in our church's Baptismal Covenant.

The fifth vow of The Baptismal Covenant—"As members 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?"—is indeed the most problematic of the six vows. After all, the Bible mentions congregations and the Church universal, but knows nothing of denominations. But in the course of Church history, denominations arose, so we contemporary Protestants have to deal with them. We United Methodists deal with our denominational reality by asking our members to "be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church" (emphasis added). That is, our denomination does not require its members to be blindly loyal to the denomination itself. It does require loyalty to Jesus Christ in our denominational household.

Lifewatch exists because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord of Life. Because The United Methodist

ORDER FORM: I wish to order: ___ copies of **THE RIGHT CHOICE: Pro-Life Sermons** (\$12.00/copy); ___ copies of **THE CHURCH AND ABORTION: In Search of New Ground for Response** (\$5.00/copy); ___ copies of **THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT ABORTION** (\$7.00/copy); ___ copies of **HOLY ABORTION?: A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice** (\$8.00/copy); ___ copies of **THE JERICHO PLAN: Breaking Down the Walls Which Prevent Post-Abortion Healing** (\$8.00/copy); ___ copies of **A LOVE FOR LIFE: Christianity's Consistent Protection of the Unborn** (\$10.00/copy); ___ copies of **30 DAYS FOR LIFE: A Prayer Devotional** (\$2.00/copy); and ___ copies of **THEOLOGY OF THE BODY SEMINAR** (Dr. Paul J. Griffiths)(\$10.00/DVD set). Prices include shipping.

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Lifewatch
Taskforce of
United Methodists on
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Church's teaching and practice on matters related to life are often compromised, in error, and/or misguided, Lifewatch's witness within United Methodism is necessary. Again, through Lifewatch's ministry, we strive to be loyal to Christ within The United Methodist Church.

Second, Mr. Blagg notes the condition under which he would depart from United Methodism: when he perceives that our denomination has become irreformable. That raises the question, Will Lifewatch's witness return The United Methodist Church to faithful teaching and practice regarding human-life issues? We hope so. We pray so. But we do not know with certainty. Our task is to offer faithful witness on life, abortion, and human sexuality—grounded in the Bible and taught by Church Tradition, consistent with reason and experience. The rest is in God's hands.

Sometimes offering this witness for life in our denomination is very frustrating. For over 25 years, by God's grace, Lifewatch has put up with the frustration. The resulting changes, on life and abortion, have not been dramatic. Even so, that is what we believe the Lord requires of us: to "be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church." Our loyalty to Christ involves offering witness to the Gospel of Life within the United Methodist household. Only the vow that requires of us loyalty to Christ, through The United Methodist Church, is sturdy enough to keep us within our denomination witnessing for reform.

Again, our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Blagg. (PTS)♥

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YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

● On the 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we recalled an historical parallel. Before the Civil War, slavery was often supported by its apologists because, they argued, slavery was good (and perhaps necessary) for the economy of the South. Today, abortion is often supported by its apologists because, they argue, it makes possible the improvement of women's health. Things that are morally wrong—slavery and abortion—are justified by goods and goals that few oppose—economic betterment and health. A question is: what is the cost of reaching such goals? Is economic strength worth the practice of slavery? Is women's health worth the practice of aborting unborn children (half of whom are girls)? With regard to slavery, history has answered. With regard to abortion, history and God's providence over history have yet to answer.

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

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