

## EMILY CRIKELAIR UPDATE

“As we enter into this day which marks nine months from the lightning strike, and as many of us join in making this a day of prayer and fasting for Emily’s complete restoration, I wanted to share with you something that happened last night as we were putting Emily to bed. Janet told her it had been nine months since she had been struck by lightning, that she had not been expected to live, and that we were praying for her complete healing. Later I began singing hymns to her, and she was just listening and looking at me intently, when all of a sudden, in the middle of ‘Amazing Grace,’ she sang with me, softly but unmistakably, these ten words: ‘Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come...’

“‘Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)’”

—Rev. Paul R. Crikelair (March 10, 2009)

## UNITED METHODISTS AND ABORTION TODAY

by Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker

*The following is an example of what United Methodist bishops should do: In truth and with love, teach and defend the Church’s faith. Thanks be to God for Bp. Whitaker’s outstanding commentary.*

The 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church took a step toward greater moral seriousness when it amended the denomination’s Social Principles on abortion.

Paragraph 161J in the 2008 Book of Discipline contains important additions: “The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies,” and “We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.” These additions give practical direction to congregations and members, and they also give more substance to the church’s commitment to the statement, “Our

belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.”

These additions in 2008 follow the addition in 2000, which states the church’s opposition to “late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life.” Over the last eight years, the church has strengthened its teaching about abortion so that it is more compatible with historic and ecumenical Christian understanding and practice.

Perhaps what is most encouraging about the 2008 General Conference is there was a real discussion about abortion. This is such a difficult subject to deal with that most would rather not discuss it.

Often we rationalize our avoidance of this subject by pointing out that there are other moral issues to consider besides abortion—the threat of the modern way of life to the natural world, the continuing existence of stockpiles of nuclear weapons, the human misery of global poverty and disease, and a system of global economics tilted against underdeveloped nations. All of these other issues must be addressed as profound moral concerns and urgent practical problems. Yet their rightful demand for our attention is no excuse for failing to be concerned about abortion. We are capable of dealing with more than one, or several, moral concerns at the same time.

Also, we often hear the truism that it is foolish to become obsessed with a single issue, such as abortion. Of course, it is a mistake to single out one moral concern to the practical exclusion of others in our daily discourse, ethical reflection, and political attention. Nevertheless, the fact that a few would be so foolish is no excuse for the rest of us avoiding being engaged in an issue. The narrowness of others who are obsessed with abortion is no excuse for the rest of us to narrow the scope of our own moral attention by excluding abortion from our view.

Abortion is a vexing issue for Christians in America because it strains the capacity of our culture and political system to find a way to protect the life of the unborn in a social environment shaped by the value of individual freedom. We Americans cherish

the cultural value of being free to make our own decisions without interference from government. Yet the freedom we exercise in the case of an abortion is more than the liberty to live where we desire or to hold whatever religious or political opinions we choose, since the exercise of this freedom results in the extermination of another human being. The political solution for achieving the right balance between the government's guarantee of individual rights and its arguable responsibility to protect totally vulnerable unborn human life is still a matter of public debate and is likely to persist.

The law of the land is not always a sufficient solution to our personal moral responsibility. As our Social Principles state, "Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience." There are sometimes complex political reasons why a particular government refuses to fully enact in civil law a moral rule. The law does not define what is moral, but only the terms of the government's use of its coercive powers in a moral situation. Whatever the legal construct might be, we human beings still have to exercise our own moral responsibilities as persons and develop together a culture that nourishes moral values and decisions.

There is one fact that will continue to affect public debate and personal moral reasoning, and that is the reality that a human life begins with conception. The novelist Walker Percy, who was trained as a physician at Columbia University, stated that "it is a commonplace of modern biology, known to every high-school student..., that the life of every individual organism, human or not, begins when the chromosomes of the sperm fuse with the chromosomes of the ovum to form a new DNA complex that henceforth directs the ontogenesis of the organism" (*Sign-Posts in a Strange Land*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, p. 341). Or, to extract a line from Wendell Berry's poem "Some Further Words" (Given, Shoemaker Hoard, 2005, p. 29): "...I know/a 'fetus' is a human child." What we do with this biological fact depends upon our values, and how we apply our values has immense consequences for unborn human beings, ourselves, and our culture.

The Christian community distinguished itself in its very beginning by opposing infanticide and abortion, both of which were commonplace in the Roman Empire. The Christian worship of God as the creator of all life and Jesus' teaching, which generates values of the worth of every human being, and our responsibility to take care of those who cannot care for themselves made the Church's position inevitable. For Christians in the American context, finding our way to this historic Christian perspective has not been easy.

I suspect that Christians who are citizens of the

United States will always have somewhat different political judgments—as citizens—about what is possible and acceptable regarding the legal solution to the moral problem of abortion. Yet, as Christians, we should continue to move toward a distinctly Christian perspective and practice in the context of a culture that may have different values and a government whose basis of individual rights may limit its capacity to encompass fully a moral position.

The movement of the General Conference over time to strengthen The United Methodist Church's pastoral guidance and witness about abortion is encouraging. As we embrace more fully the larger historic and ecumenical Christian witness about abortion, we shall grow in our ability to develop a distinctive Christian identity in a pluralistic society and a secular government.

*Bp. Whitaker is the episcopal leader of The Florida Area of The United Methodist Church. The above article first appeared as a Bishop's Column at [www.flumc.org](http://www.flumc.org).♥*

## DIALOGUE ON ABORTION IN OHIO

by Rev. John Wagner

As a member of the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church, I chair Let Justice Roll, a conference committee charged to attempt most of the ministry of a conference Board of Church and Society and a conference Board of Global Ministries. Recently our committee conducted a Dialogue on Abortion in our conference. This report, which is an abbreviated version of an original report, reflects my personal views and observations, and it includes feedback from the organizers of the dialogue.

### MY POSITION

I am typical of many in our denomination in that I do not want to be pigeonholed. I am theologically conservative. Yet I am your typical liberal on almost all political and moral questions facing the church—with the exception of abortion, on which I describe myself as somewhere in the pro-life camp. I have shared my views on abortion with the congregations I have served, and I have intervened where I was not invited (in the case of an abortion I believed would be a particularly tragic mistake). I have been to a demonstration, but would definitely not consider myself an anti-abortion activist.

### ORIGINS OF THE DIALOGUE

At the 2006 session of the West Ohio Annual Conference, Mr. Leo Scholl, a lay member, submitted a petition entitled "Prayerful Reflection on UM [United Methodist] Membership in RCRC [Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice]." Its concluding paragraph reads: "Therefore be it resolved that we call for prayerful reflection on whether United Methodist

agencies should continue their membership in RCRC.”

That year Ms. Linda Bales happened to be in attendance, since this is her home conference. Ms. Bales is a staff person at the General Board of Church and Society, and she participates directly in dialogue with RCRC. Also, as a personal friend of Mr. Scholl, Ms. Bales sought out Mr. Scholl at the conference. After some discussion, the two of them agreed to stand together before the Annual Conference and ask that the resolution be referred to the Board of Christian Social Witness (the predecessor of Let Justice Roll) for consideration. Their request was approved.

After a regrettable delay, a task force of three—including Ms. Bales (pro-choice on abortion, with some exceptions), Ms. Rosetta Schaffner (Board of Christian Social Witness and UMW, and a centrist on abortion), and Rev. Arlys Fogt (Board of Christian Social Witness, and pro-life on abortion) was finally formed. Over six months, they met regularly for study, mutual reading, and discussion. They proved to be open and caring people who had a genuine interest in hearing other points of view. All of them indicated that their positions on abortion had moved during their lifetimes, and that they did not want to be categorized.

While these three did not come to an agreement on abortion, they did agree on a way the conference might begin to talk about it. They set up a two-hour dialogue session to take place on December 6, 2008. All participants would be United Methodist and from the Miami District of the West Ohio Conference. Participation was by invitation only, and participants’ names would be not be made public. The group was to be as diverse as possible.

#### THE DIALOGUE

On December 6, 2008, the dialogue took place at United Theological Seminary in Dayton. The 20 participants included: a social worker, an activist pastor in a lower income neighborhood, a teacher in a Catholic high school, a chaplain in a Catholic hospital, a pharmacist, a nurse, a Biblical scholar, and an expectant mother. The ages of the participants ranged from the late twenties to the late seventies; two-thirds were women; three-fifths were laity; all were college educated; and four were African Americans.

As to positioning on abortion, my best guess is that we were roughly divided into three groups: a third or more clearly tending toward a pro-life position, a third or more tending toward pro-choice, and a smaller number not wanting to identify with one position more than the other.

Dr. Wendy Edwards, the president of United Theological Seminary, made some opening remarks. She affirmed and cited the historical role of the

church in dealing with significant moral questions such as abortion. Also, she questioned the practice of The United Methodist Church putting these issues to votes in the highly politicized and rushed atmosphere of General Conference. In her remarks, she did not take a personal stand on abortion, though she participated in a small-group discussion.

Next, Ms. Linda Bales handed out copies of the 2008 Book of Discipline’s statement on abortion. Her presentation was brief and professional. Had I not already known, I would have been unable to tell from her presentation what her personal beliefs on abortion were. She led us to see that, while The United Methodist Church considers abortion a moral option in some circumstances, the language the church adopted in 2008 describes the life of the unborn child and the mother as sacred, and it now devotes more attention to finding alternatives to abortion.

Then we moved into small groups of four or five. Those in the small groups were encouraged to speak candidly about their positions on abortion, and how their thinking on abortion has evolved, due to faith journeys and life experiences, over the years. These discussions lasted about an hour, and the small groups reported back to the larger group. Here is some feedback, though not exactly quoted, from the groups:

\*America is too oriented toward individualism and individual rights. The church has bought into this idea.

\*The moral climate in this country is bad. We are relativistic. We are so afraid of judging that we do not take stands.

\*We should be focusing on healing persons who have been through an abortion or a difficult pregnancy and childbirth.

\*A man should not be shut out of this decision. It is his child, too.

\*We need to have a greater commitment to preventing unplanned pregnancies. Can’t we all agree that, at least, we need to reduce the number of abortions?

While these comments may seem rather commonplace, they do seem important in this setting and from this group of people. All of these comments were taken very seriously by all the participants.

Two hours after the event had begun, Dr. Edwards offered a closing comment.

#### EVALUATIONS

Unfortunately, the evaluations were sent out late, and they were returned to us late. Not all responded, and those who did offered rather general, fairly positive comments. For example: “For a first session, I thought it was fine.” “Thank you so much for putting all this together!” “I truly enjoyed the discussion group; and it is always good to hear other views, and why they have those views.” “I thought everyone was loving, kind, and considerate of other

viewpoints and would love to be part of other discussion-dialogue sessions.”

Follow-up telephone calls provoked some constructive criticism, such as: the dialogue’s purpose and discussion questions needed more clarity; the dialogue needed more time; men seemed to dominate the discussions; the pro-choice side equated its position with compassion; the presence of clergy stifled the discussion, since many in a church setting would not publicly disagree with a pastor; people appreciated hearing things, from the other side, they had never heard; discussion seemed circular and without resolution; and specific political issues, related to human-life concerns, should have been discussed.

#### MY OBSERVATIONS

Here is what I learned about dealing with the issue of abortion in a church setting.

First, most people want to be considered good listeners who are open-minded and can hear what others have to say. In addition, most people are eager to dissociate themselves personally from extreme, or extremely vocal, positions.

Second, many are tempted to assume that people with whom they differ have not given deep thought to the issue of abortion and are therefore blind to the inconsistencies of their reasoning. I had thought folks would pull out the trump card (that is, the connection between abortion and the death penalty) more often than they actually did; people tend to play this card only around the like-minded.

Third, many people simply avoid the discussion of abortion because it involves too much conflict. The most prominent players in the abortion debate seem too partisan and too angry. When engagement occurs, people self-censor. In our dialogue, this occurred more with pro-life advocates than with the pro-choice folks.

Fourth, although men were a minority, they did speak rather more forcefully than women, even though this is an issue where one would expect women to take the lead. This is not to fault men or women, but there needs to be a way to elicit more opinions from more people.

#### SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

First, those who dare to be divisive need to be valued. The premium placed on concord is so high that obvious issues get sidestepped. The use of diplomatic language can be overdone.

Second, while strong disagreement needs to be tolerated, harsh accusations should be avoided. I recently heard almost violent language in another forum (from pro-life advocates) that does not get us anywhere.

Third, our dialogical style needs to be passionate but not personal. Political foes are able to say the

most contentious things to each other, yet they later meet in friendship. Christians need to be able to do that.

Fourth, we should spend a reasonable amount of time talking about the things we agree on—such as providing better access to prenatal care and reducing the number of unplanned pregnancies.

Fifth, a longer session would allow us to share our general perspectives and then spend significant time dealing with more specific issues.

And sixth, this issue clearly divides people who do not want to be divided: families, congregations, conferences, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, and so on.

#### NEXT STEP

I want to commend all those within our denomination—including all those who helped make this dialogue possible—who are willing to wade into this issue. It is easy to make enemies, and I admire those willing to take risks in pursuing something they believe in.

The abortion issue is not going away. Changes in technology and perspective are bringing new people into the discussion all the time. Labels such as liberal, conservative, and feminist do not reliably predict what kind of position people will take on this issue.

It is my intention to set up another dialogue session in another district.

Let the conversation, among United Methodists and others, continue.

*Rev. Wagner is the pastor of Aldersgate United Methodist Church/5464 Old Troy Pike/Huber Heights, OH 45424-5754/(937)-233-8151/ AUMCHH@sbcglobal.net.♥*

#### ANOTHER LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500  
16 February 2009

Dear Mr. President:

Last month, representing the Lifewatch community within The United Methodist Church, I wrote a letter to you. [See [Lifewatch](#) (03/01/09), pp. 5-6.] Since January 20, most United Methodists in America have grasped more firmly the enormity of the cultural and economic, moral and political, challenges now facing our nation and your new administration. Therefore, we will gladly continue to pray for you, for your family, and for your administration.

However, the Lifewatch community is deeply disappointed that, on January 23, 2009, you handed down an executive order that rescinded the Mexico

City Policy. As you know, because of this action, the United States government will now be able to fund groups that promote and/or provide abortions abroad.

For three reasons, I believe this policy reversal was an unjust, unwise decision. First, of your earliest policy actions, the executive order on the Mexico City Policy has proven to be least popular with the American people. According to a USA Today/Gallup poll (Jan. 30-Feb. 1), just 35% approved of the action, and fully 58% disapproved of it. Of those surveyed, only 59% of Democrats, 33% of Independents, and 8% of Republicans approved of your rescinding of the Mexico City Policy. At the outset, this action was divisive.

Second, through taxation, money will be paid to the federal government by millions of Americans who oppose abortion, and the government will now give some of that money to groups that promote and/or provide abortions abroad. That will most certainly prove to be increasingly divisive in American society.

Third, this policy reversal will probably increase the number of abortions that are performed internationally. After all, common sense suggests: because of your reversal of the Mexico City Policy and because of American dollars going from the federal government to groups that promote and/or provide abortions abroad, more unborn children around the world will probably be eliminated by abortion than is presently the case. The public-policy principle is: subsidy increases the occurrence of what's subsidized; taxation decreases the occurrence of what's taxed.

At the 2009 National Prayer Breakfast, you declared: "...no matter what we choose to believe, let us remember that there is no religion whose central tenet is hate. There is no God who condones taking the life of an innocent human being. This much we know." With you, millions of United Methodists and I believe that is indeed true. But since "[t]here is no God who condones taking the life of an innocent human being," logic leads to this further truth: there is no God who condones taking the life of an innocent unborn child. Your rescinding of the Mexico City Policy goes against this truth. For this reason and for the three reasons above, I register my strongest opposition to your recent action on the Mexico City Policy.

In your statement on rescinding the Mexico City Policy, you indicated that your administration "will initiate a fresh conversation on family planning, working to find areas of common ground to best meet the needs of women and families at home and around the world. I have directed my staff to reach out to those on all sides of this issue to achieve the goal of reducing unintended pregnancies..." It is my hope that your political initiative on the abortion issue and related matters will be truly inclusive—that is, that it

will include moral and political positions on abortion that are not usually found at the same table. We wish you the very best in this endeavor.

Very respectfully yours,  
(The Rev.) Paul T. Stallsworth  
Pastor, and President of Lifewatch♥

## A LETTER TO A BISHOP

Bishop Alfred W. Gwinn, Jr.  
The Raleigh Area of The United Methodist Church  
P.O. Box 10955  
Raleigh, NC 27605  
16 January 2009

Dear Bishop Gwinn:

Epiphany grace and peace to you. We trust that you are renewed in Jesus Christ, since you prepared for, and received, Christ during Advent and Christmas.

St. Peter's United Methodist Church held its 2008 Charge Conference back on September 24. At the conference, St. Peter's Church accepted in full her 2009 apportionments. Like congregations throughout the United Methodist connection, St. Peter's Church made this commitment to pay her apportionments, in full, out of obedience to Jesus Christ and to His Body the Church. Our obedience to Christ and His Church is made concrete, in part, through our obedience to the baptismal covenant, to the Discipline of The United Methodist Church, and in paying our apportionments.

St. Peter's United Methodist Church does not claim to be more obedient to Christ than other congregations. Her pastor and her laity have areas of ministry in which improvement, by the grace of God, can and should be attempted. The in-depth assessments of pastoral ministry (in 2007) and congregational ministry (in 2008), which were conducted by our Staff-Parish Relations Committee, revealed as much. In the months to come, we will be addressing the challenges at hand so that St. Peter's Church can more truly shine forth the glorious, life-changing light of the Gospel.

We have become concerned that most United Methodist pastors and congregations are not consulted about what is occurring in the denomination, in the general church, particularly in the Council of Bishops. Season after season, pastors and churches are directed by the leadership and ethos of the Council of Bishops, and they are asked every year to pay apportionments. But they are not invited, formally or informally, to comment on the directions undertaken by our bishops. Even so, as you would guess, those of us at St. Peter's Church are compelled to write what we observe, from the ground, from the Council of Bishops.

We begin by recalling what exactly United Methodist bishops are charged to do. In part, they are

charged to teach the Church's faith, to teach Christian truth. According to The Book of Discipline (2008), the bishops of The United Methodist Church are, among other things, "[t]o guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and, as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically." (Paragraph 414.3)

A question arises: Who holds the Council of Bishops and its members to the standard of teaching the Church's faith? In other words, who holds the Council and its members accountable? All the clergy and laity of the Church, in their ministries, need to be held accountable. That is the human condition. That is even the human condition of the baptized, the ordained, and the consecrated. To be sure, conference committees on episcopacy will, in the episcopal areas, do some accountability work with their bishops. However, holding the Council of Bishops accountable—in a serious, sustained way—does not seem to be taking place in church today.

To be sure, the Council of Bishops seems dedicated to moving the denomination forward. To do so, the Council and its members constantly refer to the "four foci," "five practices," and "seven pathways." These missional, programmatic packages are well and good. But if they take up most of the denomination's attention, while fundamental challenges to the faith and life of the church are neglected, those challenges are sure to intensify.

Consider, for example, the October "extraordinary ordinations" of Annie Britton and Jenna Zirbel, who had earlier been refused ordination in The United Methodist Church, in an "ecumenical" ordination service in Baltimore, MD. Four United Methodist bishops were involved, directly and indirectly, in the event. Retired Bp. Jesse DeWitt and active Bp. Susan Morrison participated in the service. Bp. Judith Craig and Bp. Leontine Kelly, both of whom are retired, sent encouraging letters to those involved. This ersatz service—ersatz because only existent communions (or "organized churches"), in fact, ordain people for ordained ministry during ordination services—provided an opportunity for the Council of Bishops to teach United Methodist clergy and laity some basic truths about the Church, ordination, and the ordained ministry. It also presented a challenge for the Council to encourage all of its members to think, and act, with The United Methodist Church. But the Council of Bishops decided only to issue a brief, ten-line statement. This refusal to teach the church (and discipline its own), this timidity, has characterized the Council of Bishops—in response to the most enduring, divisive issues of our time (homosexuality and abortion)—for forty years.

We are aware that this considered unwillingness to teach is an attempt to sustain the unity of the church. However, episcopal near-silence in the presence of organized dissent will have divisive consequences, sooner or later, for the denomination. In the 19th century, the Council of Bishops and the bishops ducked and dodged dealing with the issue of slavery—until the issue divided the church (and the nation). In our opinion, it would be best for the current Council of Bishops and its members to stand up and teach Christian truth, in Christian love, to The United Methodist Church.

St. Paul's challenge to Timothy seems most appropriate in our day not only to bishops but also to clergy and lay leadership: "Fight the good fight of the faith..." (I Timothy 6:12, RSV) "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (II Timothy 4:1-5, RSV)

We plead with you, our bishop consecrated for episcopal ministry, to do all that you can, whenever you can, however you can, to encourage the Council of Bishops to teach and live the truth of the Church's faith—even when such teaching is not held by all Council members, and even when such teaching is not welcomed by all clergy and laity. We would be glad to do what we can, at your request, to support your efforts to provoke the Council of Bishops to teach the Church's faith. That is not an idle pledge.

Several years ago, our Administrative Council voted that St. Peter's Church will "pay [apportionments] in full and protest [concerns] in public." This year, 2009, will mark our fifth year of paying in full and protesting in public. Paying and protesting, we are attempting obedience to Jesus Christ and His Church.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns, and we look forward to your response.

In Christ,  
(Col.) Andy Kowalski, USMC (Ret.), Chair, Committee on Finance  
(Mr.) Larry H. Miller, Chair, Administrative Council  
(Ms.) Brenda Roberts, Treasurer  
(Mr.) Jay Smith, Lay Leader  
(The Rev.) Paul T. Stallworth, Pastor

P.S. This letter was approved by the St. Peter's United Methodist Church's Administrative Council on January 15, 2009 by a unanimous voice vote.♥

## **A LETTER FROM A BISHOP**

St. Peter's United Methodist Church  
111 Hodges Street  
Morehead City, NC 28557  
March 4, 2009

Dear Members of St. Peter's Church and Rev. Stallsworth:

Your letter of January 16, 2009 is challenging, respectful, and undoubtedly founded in deep convictions. I commend you for the mature Christian spirit that is clearly manifested in your letter.

Your decision to remain a fully participating member of the connection's outreach and ministries, while challenging some directions of our church, is exemplary and wise. Wise, from my perspective, in that those dissenting voices have so much more credibility when they clearly are not making excuses for any lack of financial support. And your full support is a clear indicator of your love for the many causes of Christ we advance through our missional giving. Thank you!

Please know that I receive your criticism of the Council of Bishops seriously and with a listening ear. I do respect and understand the view you share from your perspective. Your yearning for the Council to teach and guard our faith is commendable. In fact, it is also my yearning.

As you might imagine, Council life and decision-making are very complex issues. It is often more than difficult for the Council to come to a consensus on issues such as the ersatz service to which you refer. Therefore, it becomes very challenging for the Council to agree on any public statement. It appears to me to be a fundamental flaw of Council structure that deserves much prayer and study.

You may be assured that I am personally committed to working on, and speaking to, this problem. I commit to you that I will "do all that I can, whenever I can, and however I can." And I will be most grateful for your prayers for God's wisdom and presence in providing my effectiveness and courage.

Once again, thank you for both your spirit and your challenge.

In Christ,  
Al Gwinn

The Raleigh Area of The United Methodist Church♥

## **A LETTER ON DOWN SYNDROME ABORTIONS FROM A PROFESSOR**

*The following was sent by e-mail on March 14, 2009 and is published with permission.*

Dear Rev. Wheeler:

I read with interest your article entitled "Down Syndrome Abortions and Renewed Debate" in the 03/01/09 issue of Lifewatch. I concur with your

concern about the "compassionate pro-choice argument" for supporting a woman's right to terminate the life of a fetus with Down syndrome, which is based on the imperfect rationale of "tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion."

Thirty-eight years ago, when I was a young faculty member in the Ob/Gyn Department at the University of Colorado Medical Center in Denver, I wrote an essay entitled "Abortion to Maintain the Quality of Life," which was distributed as a pamphlet by the Colorado Right to Life Committee. Therein I wrote: "Every individual must ask what it means when we develop policies of seeking out and eliminating certain people who are abnormal even if these abnormal individuals are still in utero. Is this, in fact, the mark of a progressive society?"

What began with abortion for Down syndrome has become the standard of care for a number of other fetal abnormalities, the number of which detected by prenatal diagnosis increases yearly. As George Will pointed out in his article by the same name, this is "eugenics by abortion" (Washington Post, April 14, 2005, p. A27). Unfortunately, this policy is supported by a number of the professional medical societies, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association. Sadly, it is also supported by my denomination, the Episcopal Church (USA).

I hope, though not with great expectation, that The United Methodist Church, The Episcopal Church, and other Protestant denominations as well will heed your admonition to "find a common voice in opposition to eugenic abortions."

Respectfully,

Dr. Watson A. Bowes, Jr.

Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## **YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT**

- Please send a gift to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338. You can give to Lifewatch through PayPal on our homepage at [www.lifewatch.org](http://www.lifewatch.org). Also, you can support Lifewatch's mission and ministry by donating stocks (since we recently opened a "DTC Brokerage Account"). For more information, please contact Cindy Evans at the Lifewatch office.

- There is still time to register for the Theology of the Body seminar—which will be led by Dr. Paul J. Griffiths, the Warren Professor of Catholic Theology at Duke University Divinity School—in New Bern, NC on May 21, 2009. This seminar will focus on Christian teaching on the dignity of the human person, marriage, and sexuality. The registration form can be found at [www.lifewatch.org](http://www.lifewatch.org). Hope to see you then and there!



**Lifewatch**  
Taskforce of  
United Methodists on  
Abortion and Sexuality

P.O. Box 306, Cottleville MO 63338

06/01/09

- \* Bp. Whitaker on "Abortion Today"
- \* Abortion dialogue in Ohio
- \* Emily Crikelair update:  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

- If you will be moving in the near future, please notify the Lifewatch office for seamless delivery. Thank you.
- Lifewatch is very pleased to announce that Bishop Scott Jones, of the Kansas Area of The United Methodist Church, will preach the 2010 Lifewatch Sermon in Washington, DC. Bp. Jones will be the third active, United Methodist bishop to preach the annual Lifewatch Sermon.
- Wesley J. Smith was named a Great Defender of Life on October 16, 2008 in New York City. In his speech that evening, Smith noted: "...I've come to believe that the most important question of the twenty-first century is: Does human life have intrinsic value, ultimate value, simply and merely because it is human? In other words, do our rights, and does our value[,] come simply with the package of being human, or do we have to earn them? As Peter Singer might say, as first exposed in the Human Life Review many years before he was even a dark cloud on the horizon, do we have to earn it by possessing certain attributes?" (Human Life Review, Fall 2008, p. 44)
- Pope Benedict XIV recently traveled to Africa. In Angola, he noted the "irony of those who promote abortion as a form of 'maternal' health care." "How disconcerting [is] the claim that the termination of life is a matter of reproductive health." (The News & Observer, 03/21/09) In our church and our society, there is much talk about health care, women's health care, and reproductive health care that presumes the provision of abortion. Such talk, therefore, involves

the health of the mother and the death of the child. The best health care, it seems, would aim to advance the well being of both the mother and the child.

- Pastor Peter Speckhard ([pspeckhard@hotmail.com](mailto:pspeckhard@hotmail.com)) is the associate editor of Forum Letter, a theologically engaging monthly newsletter that emerges out of evangelical-catholic Lutheranism. In "Confessions of a Single-Issue Voter" (November 2008), Pr. Speckhard writes: "Since college I have always said I would vote for a pro-life communist over a pro-choice Republican. That doesn't mean I don't care about other issues; I have strong opinions about a lot of political things. If both candidates were pro-life, I'd choose between them on other important issues. But abortion is for me the absolute deal-breaker. Pro-choice politicians don't even meet the threshold of basic credibility for me. If someone can't get this issue right, I just have a hard time listening to them go on about ethanol or immigration.♥"

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