

LEICESTER (“LES”) R. LONGDEN

November 29, 1946—July 6, 2022

Son, Brother, Husband, Father, Grandfather,
Disciple, Student, Preacher, Pastor, Professor, Theologian,
Faithful Servant of the Gospel of Life

His soul was commended to God at Lake Harbor United Methodist Church
(Norton Shores, Michigan) on July 12, 2022.

His body was committed to the ground at Lakeside Cemetery
(Norton Shores) on July 12.

His resurrection is anticipated and awaited.

Thanks be to God for Les Longden.

AMEN.

ROE V. WADE IS OVER

On June 24, 2022, a Friday morning, the news went forth and spread like wildfire: the United States Supreme Court had reversed *Roe v. Wade* (and *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern PA v. Casey*). The Supreme Court's *Dobbs*, *State Health Officer of the Mississippi Department of Health v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization* (hereafter, *Dobbs*) decision upheld the Mississippi law (6-3), reversed *Roe* (and *Casey*) (6-3), and offered extensive judicial reasoning for its reversal(s).

The judicial reversal of *Roe v. Wade* was historic and momentous. In 1973, *Roe* had knocked down all state abortion laws and, by default, had become federal abortion law. So in 1973, *Roe v. Wade* became abortion law for the United States of America. For nearly fifty years, *Roe* remained enthroned in a lofty legal place. Because of its presumed power, *Roe* taught the American people that abortion is nothing but a choice. *Roe* snookered most of the major institutions of American society—oldline Protestant churches (including The United Methodist Church), colleges and universities, mainstream-media outlets, Hollywood, corporations, the medical and psychological establishments, and others—to support its rule. Over 60,000,000 unborn children paid with their lives, and their mothers suffered as well. Only, it seems, the Roman Catholic Church, the evangelical churches, and

the Republican Party (or part of it) opposed *Roe* and what it allowed in American society. On June 24, *Roe* came crashing down, like Goliath of old, to the amazement of all.

What follows are three articles on *Dobbs* and *Roe*: the first article offers some instructive statements from the *Dobbs* decision. The second explains what was behind the fall of *Roe*. And the third comments on United Methodism's responses to the *Dobbs* reversal of *Roe*.

1) DOBBS SPEAKS

On the first page of the *Dobbs* decision, the **Syllabus** (or Summary) immediately gets down to legal business in this way: “*Held*: The [United States] Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; *Roe* and *Casey* are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives.” (p. 1)

In the **Opinion of the Court**, Justice Samuel Alito proposes this constitutional reasoning: “We hold that *Roe* and *Casey* must be overruled. The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision, including the one on which the defenders of *Roe* and *Casey* now chiefly rely—the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. That provision has been held to

guarantee such rights that are not mentioned in the Constitution, but any such right must be ‘deeply rooted in this Nation’s history and tradition’ and ‘implicit in the concept of ordered liberty.’....

“The right to abortion does not fall within this category.” (p. 5)

Justice Alito goes on to explain why: “Until the latter part of the 20th century, such a right [to abortion] was entirely unknown in American law. Indeed, when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted, three quarters of the States made abortion a crime at all stages of pregnancy. [On p. 29, Alito challenges some of his critics: “Are we to believe that the hundreds of lawmakers whose votes were needed to enact these laws were motivated by hostility to Catholics and women?”] The abortion right is also critically different from any other right that this Court has held to fall within the Fourteenth Amendment’s protection of ‘liberty.’ *Roe*’s defenders characterize the abortion right as similar to the rights recognized in past decisions involving matters such as intimate sexual relations [*Lawrence*], contraception [*Griswold* and *Eisenstadt*], and marriage [*Obergefell*], but abortion is fundamentally different, as both *Roe* and *Casey* acknowledged, because it destroys what those decisions call ‘fetal life’ and what the law now before us describes as an ‘unborn human being.’

“*Stare decisis* [that is, to stand on the decisions or on precedent], the doctrine on which *Casey*’s controlling opinion was based, does not compel unending adherence to *Roe*’s abuse of judicial authority. *Roe* was egregiously wrong from the start. Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences. And far from bringing about a national settlement of the abortion issue, *Roe* and *Casey* have enflamed debate and deepened division.

“It is time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives. ‘The permissibility of abortion, and the limitations, upon it, are to be resolved like most important questions in our democracy: by citizens trying to persuade one another and then voting.’ [Scalia in *Casey*] That is what the Constitution and the rule of law demand.” (pp. 5-6)

Responding to the dissent, Justice Alito describes its damning oversight: “The most striking feature of the dissent is the absence of any serious discussion of the legitimacy of the States’ interest in protecting fetal life.” (p. 37)

Furthermore, he writes: “The dissent...would impose on the people a particular theory about when the rights of personhood begin. According to the dissent, the Constitution *requires* the States to regard a fetus as lacking even the most basic human right—to live—at least until an arbitrary point in a pregnancy has passed. Nothing in the Constitution or in our Nation’s legal traditions authorizes

the Court to adopt that ‘theory of life....’” (pp. 38-39)

Perhaps responding to those who would try to intimidate the Supreme Court from overturning *Roe*, Justice Alito waxes philosophical at the end of the Opinion: “We do not pretend to know how our political system or society will respond to today’s decision overruling *Roe* and *Casey*. And even if we could foresee what will happen, we would have no authority to let that knowledge influence our decision. We can only do our job, which is to interpret the law, apply longstanding principles of *stare decisis*, and decide this case accordingly.

“We therefore hold that the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion. *Roe* and *Casey* must be overruled, and the authority to regulate abortion must be returned to the people and their elected representatives.” (p. 69)

Concurring with the Opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas claims: “Nowhere is this exaltation of judicial policymaking clearer than this Court’s abortion jurisprudence.... That 50 years have passed since *Roe* and abortion advocates still cannot coherently articulate the right (or rights) at stake proves the obvious: The right to abortion is ultimately a policy goal in desperate search of a constitutional justification.” (pp. 4 and 5)

Near the end of his contribution, Justice Thomas writes: “While *Dred Scott* ‘was overruled on the battlefields of the Civil War and by constitutional amendment after Appomattox,’ (*Obergefell*) that overruling was ‘[p]urchased at the price of immeasurable human suffering.’ (*Adarand Constructors*, Thomas) Now today, the Court rightly overrules *Roe* and *Casey*—two of this Court’s ‘most notoriously incorrect’ substantive due process decisions, (*Timbs*, Thomas)—after more than 63 million abortions have been performed.... The harm caused by this Court’s forays into substantive due process remains immeasurable.” (pp. 6-7)

Concurring, with crystal clarity, Justice Kavanaugh describes exactly what went wrong in the *Roe* decision and what is going on in the *Dobbs* decision: “Because the Constitution is neutral on the issue of abortion, this Court also must be scrupulously neutral. The nine unelected Members of this Court do not possess the constitutional authority to override the democratic process and to decree either a pro-life or a pro-choice abortion policy for all 330 million people in the United States.

“Instead of adhering to the Constitution’s neutrality, the Court in *Roe* took sides in the issue and unilaterally decreed that abortion was legal throughout the United States up to the point of viability (about 24 weeks of pregnancy). The Court’s decision today properly returns the Court to a position of neutrality and restores the people’s authority to address the issue of abortion through the processes of democratic self-government established by the Constitution....

“To be clear, then, the Court’s decision today *does not*

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

outlaw abortion throughout the United States. On the contrary, the Court's decision properly leaves the question of abortion for the people and their elected representatives in the democratic process." (p. 3)

Dissenting, Justice

Breyer, Justice Sotomayor, and Justice Kagan repeat the terms and arguments heard and read often in the American public discourse shaped by *Roe* and *Casey*: "equality," "equal members of our Nation," "social and economic equality [of women]," "women...charting the course of their own lives," "liberty," "choice," "private choices," "rights," "women's rights," "right to choose," "reproductive rights," "women lacking financial resources," "bodily integrity," "upheaval in law and society" [that *Dobbs* might ignite], "control over their bodies," "women's health," "woman's life and health," "how little 'the Court' knows or cares about women's lives or about the suffering [this] decision will cause," "loss of power, control, and dignity will be immense," "costs of [this] decision," this decision "destroys all those individual plans and expectations [of those impacted]," "fetus's viability," "viability line," "unplanned pregnancy," "undue burden," "[owning] their own bodies," "nearly half of women who seek abortion care live in households below the poverty line," "places in jeopardy other rights," "'a surrender to political pressure,'" and "worldwide liberalization of abortion laws." In other words, the justices in dissent do not seem to bring much jurisprudential gravitas or insight to their task.

After rehearsing many familiar lines, Justices Breyer, Sotomayor, and Kagan conclude: "With sorrow—for this Court, but more, for the many millions of American women who have today lost a fundamental constitutional protection—we dissent." (p. 60)

2) WHY DID ROE GO?

In its *Dobbs* decision, the United States Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Why did this happen? Three contributing factors will be proposed.

First, *Roe* was bad law. Some of the most outstanding legal scholars and jurists in the United States, even those of a more liberal or progressive mindset, have been devastatingly critical of *Roe* over the years. Here is a sampling.

United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg described *Roe* as a "heavy-handed judicial intervention [that] was difficult to justify and appears to have provoked, not resolved, conflict." Furthermore, she said that "*Roe* isn't really about the woman's choice, is it? It's about the doctor's freedom to practice...it wasn't woman-centered, it was physician-centered." Please consider that statement: Justice Ginsburg believed *Roe*

"'As a matter of constitutional interpretation and judicial method, Roe borders on the indefensible. I say this as someone utterly committed to the right to choose.'"

was more committed to protecting the doctor's practice than the woman's choice.

Professor Laurence Tribe of Harvard Law School said, "One of the most curious things about *Roe* is that, behind its own verbal smokescreen, the substantive judgment on which

it rests is nowhere to be found."

Edward Lazarus, former clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun (who wrote the *Roe* decision) declared, "As a matter of constitutional interpretation and judicial method, *Roe* borders on the indefensible. I say this as someone utterly committed to the right to choose.... A constitutional right to privacy broad enough to include abortion has no meaningful foundation in constitutional text, history, or precedent...."

John Hart Ely, clerk for United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, hit hard: "[*Roe*] is not constitutional law and gives almost no sense of an obligation to try to be."

Benjamin Wittes, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution stated that "[*Roe*] is a lousy opinion that disenfranchised millions of conservatives on an issue about which they care deeply." (from Bradley Mattes, Life Issues Institute, "Worse Is Likely Coming," May 12, 2022, Life Issues website)

Many more left-of-center critics of *Roe* could be listed, but they are not necessary to prove the point: *Roe* was bad law, even for those who preferred its pro-choice policy.

Second, *Roe*'s uncertain relationship to the Constitution could have been suspected, if not predicted, because the decision was written by one Harry A. Blackmun (1908-1999). Because of Justice Blackmun's devotion to Methodism, his public influence, and particularly his *Roe* decision, he has been remembered and celebrated by sectors of The United Methodist Church. (Even though over 60 million abortions resulted from the decision he wrote.) Such a United Methodist tribute to Justice Blackmun appeared five days after the *Dobbs* decision was released.

"The (only) Methodist on the court" was written by Rev. James A. Harnish, a pastor who today has more than a little visibility and influence within The United Methodist Church. He posted the article on his blog Jim Harnish: Personal Reflections on Life and Faith (jimharnish.org). In the article, Rev. Harnish recalls that, at Justice Blackmun's memorial service, Rev. Dr. William A. Holmes spoke on "The Churchmanship of Harry Blackmun." In 1999, Dr. Holmes stated: Justice Blackmun's "theory of Constitutional interpretation was the same as his theory of biblical interpretation: a theory grounded in compassion." (emphasis added)

Rev. Harnish also calls on Dena S. Davis—

specifically, on her article “Moral Ambition: The Sermons of Harry A. Blackmun” (Brooklyn Law Review, Volume 72, Issue 1, 2006, p. 235)—to provide additional detail of Blackmun’s method of interpretation: “Justice Blackmun clearly saw it as his job, within the confines of Constitutional jurisprudence, to help make the Constitution ‘more perfect.’ What that meant, among other things, was to interpret the document as compassionately as possible, and as inclusively as possible. Whether the petitioner was an alien lately come to America or a young child completely dependent on the state for the most basic protections [at “a young child,” notice Ms. Davis’ moral blindness to abortion, and remember Blackmun’s *Roe* decision made abortion available throughout the United States], deciding cases in a way that made the Constitution more responsive to their moral claims was, in the Justice’s eyes, taking the Constitution and therefore our nation, a little further down the road toward perfection.” (emphasis added)

The editor of Lifewatch is most definitely not a scholar of the Constitution, but I am certain that every decision handed down by the United States Supreme Court, whose constitutional interpretation is based on “compassion,” will be overturned, sooner or later. Compassionate interpretation of the Constitution, according to Justice Blackmun or any other Justice, does not lead to legal reasoning that results in solid, legal decision-making. (Likewise, your editor believes that compassion is not a particularly good way to interpret the Bible. In this world, at this time, compassion turns the Biblical text into sentimental mush in a hurry. Witness what is happening in The United Methodist Church around you. To be sure, Christians are called by God to be compassionate toward others; but such compassion must never become merely emotional expression. Such compassion must always be driven by *agape* love—sacrifice for the actual good of the beloved.)

Back to Justice Blackmun. Interpreting the Constitution with the help of compassion, he was bound to write *Roe* in such a way that it would be overruled.

(FYI: In the *Dobbs* decision, Justice Alito recognizes Justice Blackmun’s compassionate wandering in *Roe*: “*Roe* expressed the ‘feel[ing]’ that the Fourteenth Amendment was the provision that did the work, but its message seemed to be that the abortion right could be found *somewhere* in the Constitution and that specifying its exact location was not of paramount importance.” [p. 10, Opinion of the Court, underlined emphasis added] Alito’s footnote #16 to that sentence goes on: “The Court’s words were as follows: ‘This right of privacy, whether it be found in the Fourteenth Amendment’s concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action, as we feel it is, or as the District Court determined, in the Ninth Amendment’s reservation of rights to the people, is broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.’” [p. 10, Opinion of the Court, underlined emphasis added])

“To be sure, Christians are called by God to be compassionate toward others; but such compassion must never become merely emotional expression.”

Third, and here you must forgive the editor’s impressions struggling for expression, *Roe* would erode as the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) establishment in the United States, once led by oldline Protestantism, continues to decline toward destruction.

Roe and Blackmun exude a whiff of this arrogant sensibility: “American people, *we* have been to school. *We* are your betters. *We* know what is best for you. *We* are going to do a favor for you and settle the abortion issue for you. *We* are going to set aside tradition, history, and democracy, and establish abortion law in America for you. *We* stay in touch with this changing world, and so *we* will act for you. In time, you will appreciate what *we* do for you.”

But after *Roe*, the WASP establishment was challenged by a growing insurgency often led by Catholics and Evangelicals. The Pro-Life Movement became a populist movement that popularized and promoted the Christian claim that each person, every person, no matter how small or great, no matter how weak or strong, is created by God in the image of God. This basic theological truth provided the energy that propelled the movement that stands for life and opposes abortion. Unfortunately, this side of the coming Kingdom of God, we will not fully know how much Providence and the Word of God were responsible for gathering, advancing, and sustaining the Pro-Life Movement, and overturning *Roe*.

3) UNITED METHODISM RESPONDS TO *DOBBS*

Different voices within The United Methodist Church responded to the *Dobbs* decision and to its overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. On June 25, 2022, one day after the release of the *Dobbs* decision, both the Council of Bishops (COB) and the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) put out press releases. The United Methodist News Service headline, “UMC bishops bemoan US Supreme Court’s decision on abortion,” captured the tone of the bishops’ statement. The GBCS’s unsubtle subtitle read: “United Methodists value women’s rights and recognize the importance of ministries that support women and their reproductive health.” Both statements can be found online.

Both the COB and GBCS responses to *Dobbs* quote this line from The United Methodist Church’s Social Principle on abortion: “tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion” (Paragraph 161K, The Book of

Discipline [2016]). That is the most pro-choice claim in this long Social Principle.

Disappointingly, both official responses to *Dobbs* silence the remainder of the Social Principle on abortion, which is remarkably pro-life or protective of the unborn child and mother. The pro-life portion of the Social Principle on abortion: admits “the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion;” supports “adult notification and consent” [before an abortion]; rejects “abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and...gender selection and eugenics;” “oppose[s] late-term abortion...(partial-birth abortion);” directs the Church to “offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies,...[and] provide nurturing ministries” to [all post-abortion, pregnant, and postpartum women]; advocates for “the diminishment of high abortion rates;” encourages the ministries of “crisis pregnancy centers;” advances “the option of adoption;” and challenges the Church to offer further protection to the mother and unborn child. All of these statements are ignored and not mentioned by the COB and the GBCS.

Both the COB and GBCS statements express concerns about the lack of equity in abortion access. At the same time, they ignore the fact that abortion rates are significantly higher among Black and Hispanic women than among White women. Are the COB and GBCS pleased by that fact?

Both of the COB and GBCS press releases do not mention that over 60,000,000 abortions were performed in the United States since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Does that not warrant The United Methodist Church’s lament?

Both of the COB and GBCS documents neglect United Methodist doctrine on Church-State matters: “Of the Rulers of the United States of America” and “Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority” in The Articles of Religion, and “Civil Government” in The Confession of Faith.

Both of the COB and GBCS statements do not quote John Wesley’s expressed opposition to abortion in his day.

Both of the COB and GBCS official responses to *Dobbs* turn away from the near unity of historic, ecumenical Christianity in standing for life and against abortion. From its establishment, the Church has been protective of the unborn child and mother, and against abortion.

In conclusion, both the COB and GBCS official statements on *Dobbs* fall short, because they repeat partisan-political talking points that are available from the pro-choice websites and from left-of-center cable news networks; and because they neglect rich Biblical, Traditional, ecumenical, doctrinal, and denominational resources at their disposal. Perhaps the bishops and the board staff could give it another try. (PTS) ♥

WHY LIFEWATCH STANDS FOR LIFE AND MARRIAGE

With the *Dobbs* decision in hand, this is a prime time for some self-reflection within the Lifewatch community.

Since 1987, Lifewatch has offered up witness for life over against abortion, and for marriage over against sexual chaos, within The United Methodist Church and beyond. What has motivated Lifewatch to make this witness for 35 years?

- * Not a conservative ideology.
- * Not a commitment to the Republican Party.
- * Not a dedication to the Pro-Life Movement in American public life.
- * Not a desire to go to battle in the Culture Wars.
- * Not an intention to do good in the world.
- * Not a contrarian, difficult spirit. (We hope.)

Lifewatch offers witness on life and marriage because life and marriage are essential parts of the Church’s faith, the Apostolic faith, “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3, NRSV). John Wesley called this the faith of “primitive Christianity.” Today some call this the faith of “historic Christianity,” “mere Christianity,” or “basic Christianity.” Whatever it is called, this faith was revealed and given to the Church during its first three hundred years, received by the earliest Church, and handed on by that early Church.

To be sure, this faith has changed. It has developed. It has deepened. But its dogmatic and moral claims have not been reversed or overturned or eclipsed. (Also, please note: while life and marriage are part of the Church’s revealed faith, they can also be supported by natural and moral law.)

Today, as on all days following the formation of its faith, being the Church of Jesus Christ means upholding life (against abortion) and marriage (against libertinism). Under the Headship and Lordship of Jesus Christ, that is simply part of what the Church believes and does. Again, truly being the Church, under Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, means protecting life and upholding marriage. That is the simple reason for Lifewatch’s witness. (PTS) ♥

WHAT UNITED METHODIST PASTORS OWE THEIR CONGREGATIONS DURING THIS TIME

Pastors must:

1. Teach clearly and often that Jesus Christ is the Head and Lord of the Church.
2. Prepare for and practice ministry that is faithful to Christ and His Church each day that they are under appointment.
3. Be honest and transparent. That requires pastors to

state their personal intentions: to remain United Methodist, to go Global Methodist, or to do something else.

4. Remind their congregations that schism now occurring in The United Methodist Church is a direct result of the false and flawed leadership of the bishops—some of whom flagrantly violated church discipline, many of whom stubbornly refused to teach church doctrine, and all of whom were simply unable to hold each other accountable to the church's doctrine and discipline.

5. Trust and follow the Word of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, throughout their discernment processes about whether or not to remain in The United Methodist Church.

6. Lead their congregations, with the highest degree of fairness and openness, to make up their own minds about remaining in, or departing from, The United Methodist Church. (PTS) ♥

WHAT CATHOLICITY LOOKS LIKE: ON COMMUNION AND ABORTION

A church—be it Roman Catholic, United Methodist or Global Methodist—that is catholic upholds what the Church has everywhere, always, and by all taught, and holds its own accountable to the same historic teaching. That is catholicity.

A church—be it Roman Catholic or United Methodist or Global Methodist—that is not catholic makes up its teaching and discipline as it goes along. No continuity. No consistency. No coherence. Just pragmatism. Just crisis management. Just evolving with the times.

What follows is an example of authentic catholicity.

Salvatore Cordileone is the Archbishop of San Francisco. On May 19, he wrote a "Notification to the Speaker of the House of Representatives," Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). Notifying Rep. Pelosi, Archbishop Cordileone was simply following church doctrine and discipline, nothing more and nothing less.

Methodically laying out his case, Archbishop Cordileone makes reference to the three most recent popes. Regarding Pope Francis, he writes: "His Holiness, Pope Francis, in keeping with his predecessors, has likewise been quite clear and emphatic in teaching on the dignity of the human life in the womb."

Regarding Pope John Paul II, the archbishop notes that he "was also quite consistent in upholding this constant teaching of the Church, and frequently reminded us that 'those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a "grave and clear obligation to oppose" any law that attacks human life [including abortion]. For them,

"[The] schism now occurring in The United Methodist Church is a direct result of the false and flawed leadership of the bishops—some of whom flagrantly violated church discipline...."

as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them' [November 24, 2002]. A Catholic legislator who supports procured abortion, after knowing the teaching of the Church, commits a manifestly grave sin which is a cause of most serious scandal to others.

Therefore, universal Church law

provides that such persons 'are not to be admitted to Holy Communion.' [Code of Canon Law, can. 915]"

Regarding Pope Benedict XVI, the archbishop recalls that, as Prefect for the Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith, he wrote to the Catholic bishops in the United States in 2002. In his letter to the American bishops, Benedict claims: "...when a person's formal cooperation becomes manifest (understood, in the case of a Catholic politician, as his consistently campaigning and voting for permissive abortion and euthanasia laws), his Pastor should meet with him, instructing him about the Church's teaching, informing him that he is not to present himself for Holy Communion until he brings to an end the objective situation of sin, and warning him that he will otherwise be denied the Eucharist. When 'these precautionary measures have not had their effect...' and the person in question, with obstinate persistence, still presents himself to receive the Holy Eucharist, 'the minister of Holy Communion must refuse to distribute it.'"

In his notification, Archbishop Cordileone returns to Speaker Pelosi: "Unfortunately, I have not received such an accommodation to my many requests to speak with you again since you vowed to codify the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision in federal law following upon passage of Texas Senate Bill 8 last September. That is why I communicated my concerns to you via letter on April 7, 2022, and informed you there that, should you not publicly repudiate your advocacy for abortion 'rights' or else refrain from referring to your Catholic faith in public and receiving Holy Communion, I would have no choice but to make a declaration, in keeping with canon 915, that you are not to be admitted to Holy Communion.

"As you have not publicly repudiated your position on abortion, and continue to refer to your Catholic faith in justifying your position [on abortion] and to receive Holy Communion, that time has now come. Therefore, in light of my responsibility as the Archbishop of San Francisco to be 'concerned for all the Christian faithful entrusted to [my] care'..., by means of this communication I am hereby notifying you that **you are not to present yourself for Holy Communion and, should you do so, you are not to be admitted to Holy Communion, until such time as you publicly repudiate your advocacy for the legitimacy of abortion and confess and receive absolution of this grave sin in the sacrament of Penance.**

"Please know that I stand ready to continue our

"In my experience, the place where bourgeois Christianity flourishes is in church agencies. This might explain why the faith in Germany is in such a mess."

conversation at any time, and will continue to offer up prayer and fasting for you.

"I also ask all of the faithful of the Archdiocese of San Francisco to pray for all our legislators, especially Catholic legislators who promote procured abortion, that with the help and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they may undergo a conversion of heart in this most grave matter and human life may be protected and fostered in every stage and condition of life."

The courage, clarity, decisiveness, and faithfulness of Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone provides refreshment beyond description.

Weeks later, Rep. Pelosi traveled to Rome and received Communion at the Vatican in the presence of the Pope. What a most bitter disappointment that was. But that disappointment does not erase the exemplary catholicity of Archbishop Cordileone. (PTS) ♥

AGAINST "BOURGEOIS CHRISTIANITY"

(This article subtly critiques not only some Roman Catholics but also some United Methodist clergy, laity, and congregations. Those critiqued are usually considered the best, the brightest, the most elevated, the most respected, and the most respectable. Thank you for slowing down, for reading this article carefully, and for thinking about it.)

In 2020, Dr. Tracey Rowland won the significant Ratzinger Prize for Theology. (The "Ratzinger" is from Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI.) After that award came an interview with Carl E. Olson, which appeared in The Catholic World Report under the title "A Conversation with Tracey Rowland about Ratzinger, Christian humanism, bourgeois Christianity" (December 14, 2021).

Commenting on the 94-year-old "pope emeritus," Benedict XVI, Dr. Rowland noted that "while he is clearly frail, there is no dimming of the light."

Rowland went on to discuss "bourgeois Christianity:" There was "the problem of what Newman [John Henry Newman, 1801-1890, Anglican theologian who became Roman Catholic] called 'the religion of the world' and what the Germans tend to call 'bourgeois Christianity.' Newman argued that for every generation of Christians there is a temptation to take bits of the Christian tradition—the ones that are most easily assimilated to contemporary social ideas—and to amplify these bits,

while ignoring the more socially unfashionable elements of the Christian kerygma [the apostolic proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ].

"This 'bourgeois Christianity' is the attitude of people who identify themselves as Christians but define Christianity by a series of markers that are in no way different from the prevailing social fashions. The adjective 'bourgeois' is used because it is typical of middle-class people that they want to foster their upward social mobility. 'Bourgeois Christians' are therefore people who are careful not to allow their Christianity to stand in the way of their social success. This usually means 'muting' or even rejecting certain elements of the tradition.

"Ratzinger used the expression 'bourgeois Pelagianism' to refer to the mentality that Christ does not expect us to be saints. It is sufficient that we are decent types who recycle our rubbish, donate a few dollars to charity, and refrain from murdering and raping our neighbors or stealing their property. The mentality is that Christ was not really serious when he said that we must be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48)."

"In my experience," Rowland stated, "the place where bourgeois Christianity flourishes is in church agencies. [How about United Methodist institutions, boards, and agencies?] This might explain why the faith in Germany is in such a mess."

Then the theologian proposed the real-world consequences of bourgeois Christianity: "...if you want to foster the demise of Christianity, just continue to offer people the bourgeois version. If you want to re-evangelise Germany, then you need to be heroic and present the entire kerygma, including the theology of the cross, as Ratzinger/Benedict tried to do.

"The same applies to the Church in the rest of the world."

In other words, bishops and pastors and laity, preach and teach and practice the truth (or the Word of God), the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God! That is the faithful way forward. (PTS) ♥

A PASTOR PLEADS FOR CATHOLICITY

Rev. T. Judson Dunlap is an elder in the North Carolina Conference, an experienced United Methodist pastor, and a reserve Navy/Marine chaplain. His emails and posts can provide extraordinary commentary on The United Methodist Church.

For example, last year he wrote that we live in "a world that has 'gone off and gotten more "informed" and [too] sophisticated for its own good.'" According to Dunlap, this has had a profound impact on the Church and the congregations: "Bit by bit, committee meeting by committee meeting, vote by vote, ecclesial convention by ecclesial convention, natural-disaster project by natural-disaster project, social issue by social issue, academic seminar by academic seminar, faculty hire by faculty hire,

we Protestants (Methodists, et al) have given away the historic Christian faith and apostolic tradition to appease the masses with democratic appetite and strut—leaving the church emptied, confused, and bored until the ‘next issue.’” (September 4, 2021)

More recently and more theologically, he proposed: “An arresting thought in editing some recent writing: ‘The world outside the church is the domain of Satan (I Cor 5.5; II Cor 4.4), in which one is hardly to find either moral or theological illumination’”—John M. G. Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan*, p. 391). Fair statement by Barclay?

“How might this challenge The United Methodist Church’s persistent embrace of secular vocabulary and unbaptized ideologies for social and political ethics, and its push for clergy to lead people beyond the walls of the church to engage the world? While appreciating the need to engage the world with the gospel, for sure, should we trust so much that our people are theologically and spiritually formed well enough to go out and be authentic witnesses for Christ in the world, the domain of Satan, per Paul’s word from God with ‘every thought captive to obey Christ’ (II Cor 10:5)? Yes, Paul seems to run crudely over polite sensibilities, but that’s Barclay’s point: Paul’s gospel confronts the world’s way of thinking because the world has rebelled against God (Romans 1:18-3:18). John Wesley taught that human ethical thinking is depraved apart from the restoring grace of God. Calvin taught that the human mind is a ‘factory of idols.’

“Perhaps we’ve overdone the idea of running ‘beyond the walls’ to the point that our people don’t expect much to happen ‘inside the walls’ on Sunday morning but must always have ‘a project’ to ‘get our people together for fellowship’ and ‘crank things up’ Methodist-style with lots of activities and works-righteousness to go ‘fix the world.’ How about fix our faith first? Any exhausted clergy and laity out there ready to try something different for a change? Perhaps people need rest from their wearied lives to be lifted supernaturally and to transcend the world’s ways of thinking and politicking to experience the divine within the walls where Baptism occurs by water and the Spirit and the Eucharist is embodied. We United Methodists ‘say the right words,’ and our clergy learn them in seminary, but do we truly embody the gospel in faithful witness besides ‘doing good for the world?’ What about taking more seriously Christian fellowship and spiritual engagement within the walls during the worship and Sunday School hour rather than trying to reinvent the wheel every year or four years with a new slogan and ‘missional’ activities? Is this a fair pleading?....” (May 18, 2022)

Yes, Rev. Dunlap, this is a fair pleading. You are simply pleading for The United Methodist Church to become more catholic in its faith and life. Your pleading is not only fair; it is also faithful to the Lord of the Church. (PTS) ♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- Thank you for your support for Lifewatch’s witness—be it regular, occasional, or one-time. Because of your financial gifts, Lifewatch can keep pointing United Methodists to the Gospel of Life. As usual, your gifts to Lifewatch can be given in three ways. First, write a check to “Lifewatch,” and send it to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/ Cottleville, MO 63338. Second, give stocks by first contacting Mrs. Cindy Evans in the Lifewatch office. And third, if you are over the age of 72, donate 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 required minimum distribution without being considered as taxable income. If you are considering giving a gift from your IRA, please first consult with Mrs. Evans.) Mrs. Evans and I are deeply grateful for you, for your friendship in Christ, for your prayerful petitions for Lifewatch, and for your financial support of this ministry.

- “Early this morning police and fire responded to smoke at CompassCare, a pro-life medical office in Buffalo [NY]. The building was firebombed. The windows in the reception room and nurses’ office were broken and fires lit. Graffiti on the building left by the arsonists refers to the abortion terrorist group Jane’s Revenge reading, ‘Jane Was Here.’ The group took responsibility for a firebombing of a pro-life organization in Madison, WI in May. The organization vowed more of the same in other states as the Supreme Court decision reversing *Roe v. Wade* nears and have been promoting...what they have dubbed a ‘Night of Rage.’

“CompassCare and other pro-life service centers [and churches] have been the target of violence for months both online and in-person. New York’s Governor not only ignored the violence but instead earmarked \$35 million in taxpayer funds to increase security at abortion clinics. Adding insult to injury, the New York legislature passed a bill investigating pro-life pregnancy centers precisely because they do not perform abortions.” (James R. Harden, “Buffalo Pro-life Pregnancy Center, CompassCare, Firebombed,” www.compasscare.info, June 7, 2022)

Since the mainstream media neglects stories like this one, Lifewatch must run them. Truth mandates it.

- Since we are reading and thinking about the United States Constitution more than usual these days, consider this: “Now, take the [C]onstitution according to its plain reading, and I defy the presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. On the other hand it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery.” These words are from Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) and his “What, to the Slave, Is the Fourth of July.” This significant speech was delivered on July 5, 1852—just after the 76th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence—in Rochester, NY. (This significant speech is found at blackpast.org, January 24,

2007.) The Constitution, it seems, has this history of reforming the nation to include and protect those who were once violently mistreated—for example, African-American slaves and unborn children.

- In August of 2021, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arlington (VA), released a teaching statement on gender ideology. Entitled “A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology,” the five-page statement is a marvelous gift to this northern Virginia diocese and beyond. Its subheadings suggest the direction of its teaching: “Introduction,” “Goodness/Gift of the Human Person and Human Sexuality,” “Our Transcendent Purpose,” “Our Wounded Human Nature,” “Gender Dysphoria,” “The Witness of Science,” “The Christian Response,” “Language,” “For Clergy, Catechists, and Teachers,” “For Parents,” and “For Those Struggling.” Here are a few sentences that reveal the power of this document: “In this sensitive area of identity [i.e., sexual identity]...there is a great danger of a misguided charity and false compassion. In this regard, we must recall, ‘Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral.’ [Benedict XVI] Christians must always speak and act with both charity and truth. After the example of the Apostle Paul, they are to seek to speak the truth in love (cf. Eph 4:15).” Google this statement. Go to it on the Internet. Read it. Be instructed by it. Teach it to others. And give thanks, to God, for the episcopal ministry of Bp. Burbidge.

- United Methodist Women (UMW) has been renamed and rebranded. Its new name brand is United Women in Faith. After the preliminary majority decision on *Dobbs*

“The Constitution, it seems, has this history of reforming the nation to include and protect those who were once violently mistreated—for example, African-American slaves and unborn children.”

v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization was leaked in early May, United Women in Faith had this to say about it, in part: “As a leading Christian women’s organization committed to the needs of women, children, and youth, United Women in Faith must voice alarm at the possibility of women losing the Constitutional

right to legal abortion guaranteed by the Supreme Court’s precedent-setting *Roe v. Wade* decision. Overturning *Roe* could also endanger the right to privacy that should also protect women from being prosecuted for a miscarriage and affords women access to widely used, safe, and legal contraceptives.”

In response to this United Women in Faith’s statement, Collin Bastian of the Institute on Religion and Democracy noted: “This statement ignored that The United Methodist Church, at its 2016 governing General Conference, officially revoked its 40-year support for *Roe v. Wade*. Meanwhile, the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill across from the U.S. Supreme Court posted on its sign that ‘Christ values and trusts women. Follow Christ,’ apparently in response to the court’s impending abortion ruling. Of course, the Gospel doesn’t say Christ trusts women or men but asks us all to trust Him.” (“Religious Left Panics After Dobbs Leak,” Juicy Ecumenism website, May 8, 2022)

- Francis X. Maier—a senior fellow in the Catholic Studies Program at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC—wrote “Clarifications after ‘Dobbs’” (July 13, 2022) for The Catholic Thing website. Here is his second clarification: “*The threat of impending ‘Fascism! Right around the corner!’—a treasured anxiety*

SEND LIFEWATCH TO A FRIEND!

Extend your outreach—and ours—with a free subscription to a friend. Simply provide the information requested below. Also, your contributions—however large or small—will help advance the ministry of Lifewatch by inspiring United Methodists to love both the unborn child and mother. Thank you for caring enough to act.

Name: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Please mail to: Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville MO 63338.

Lifewatch is published by the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

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 **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 **10 TIPS ON HOW NOT TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEX** (\$12.00/copy); and _____ copies of **30 DAYS FOR LIFE: A Prayer Devotional** (\$2.00/copy).

Name: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Prices include shipping. Please enclose your check, payable to Lifewatch, and mail to: Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville MO 63338.



Lifewatch

Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality

P.O. Box 306, Cottleville MO 63338

09/01/22

- * Why did Roe go?
- * UMC agency and bishops ignore high Black/Brown abortion rates
- * Guidance for pastors in a time of division

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lancaster PA
Permit No. 507

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

of the Trump Dark Ages—*might oddly come true*. Just not from the direction you thought. Mr. Trump, with his vulgar style and legion of faults, nonetheless had the effect of a sun lamp or disagreeable medicine on a nasty boil: He drew all the hysteria, fanaticism, and arrogance of hardcore progressive thought to the skin's surface, where the boil and its poison popped.

“Eric Voegelin [1901-1985], the distinguished political philosopher who fled Nazi Germany, noted that progressivism, Marxism, fascism, and national socialism share the same family DNA. They're all variants of the same intolerant, gnostic religious impulse. They each, in their own way, repudiate rational public discourse and insist on what Voegelin called a ‘prohibition of questions.’ It doesn't matter that the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision was badly reasoned and unrelated to anything actually in the Constitution. It doesn't matter that it invented a new ‘right’ out of thin air. *Roe* had the sanctity of divine revelation. Challenging [*Roe*] proves one's wickedness without the need for tedious debate.” Maier's words are worthy of consideration.

LETTERS/COMMENTS TO THE EDITOR:

Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Lifewatch Editor
2400 Foxcroft Road NW, Wilson, NC 27896
252.640.2755 / paulstallsworth@nccumc.org

HAVE YOU MOVED?

If so, please contact Ms. Cindy Evans to change your address.
Call: 636.294.2344 / Email: lifewatch@charter.net

VISIT US AT: www.lifewatch.org
and on Facebook by searching for: lifewatch-taskforce

● Bishop Tom Bickerton, over the New York Conference, is the new president of the Council of Bishops. In a recent interview with Rev. Molly Vetter, Bp. Bickerton talked about The United Methodist Church's General Conference, and not in a positive way. He said that “part of our paralysis is that we're [United Methodists are] dependent upon a meeting [General Conference] that has been dysfunctional for fifty years.” (wheredowegoumc.com/bishop-tom-bickerton/) Before calling out the dysfunction of General Conference, the bishop might start addressing some of the dysfunction in the Council of Bishops. After all, he is now the president of the Council. That is, he is not a powerless, oppressed victim. Just saying....

● “One of the most powerful corrupting forces in human affairs is the desire for a quiet life. It leads good people to join mobs they don't support and to be spectators to injustice.” (The Quillette Editorial Board, “The Disgraceful Firing of Joshua T. Katz,” May 26, 2022, quillette.com)

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

Lifewatch Advisory Board

Rev. Paul R. Crikelair
Pastor, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

Mrs. Cindy Evans
Administrator/Outreach Coordinator
Cottleville, Missouri

Dr. Stanley Hauerwas
Duke University

Ms. Myrna Howard
Alva, Florida

Rev. Bill Hughes
Lexington, Kentucky

Rev. Edward H. Johnson
Pastor, Sandston, Virginia

Rev. Harold D. Lewis (ret.)
Florida Conference

Mr. John Lomperis
Chicago, Illinois

Mr. Donald T. Siress
Treasurer
O'Fallon, Missouri

Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth
Lifewatch President, Editor
Wilson, North Carolina

Don and Carla Thompson
Whiteville, Tennessee

Rev. Mrs. Pat B. Tony
Pastor, Manassas, Virginia

Bp. Timothy Whitaker (ret.)
Keller, Virginia

†

Rev. Dr. Leicester R. Longden
(1946-2022)

Dr. Geoffrey Wainwright
(1939-2020)

Dr. Thomas C. Oden
(1931-2016)

Dr. John E. Juergensmeyer
(1934-2014)

Bishop William R. Cannon
(1916-1997)

Dr. Albert C. Outler
(1908-1989)

Titles and affiliations are for identification purposes only.