

## ON ABORTION

We mention first the problem of the deliberate interruption of pregnancy usually called abortion (*abortus*, the suppression of the fruit of the body). This question arises where conception has taken place but for varying reasons the birth and existence of the child are not desired and are perhaps even feared. The persons concerned are the mother who either carries out the act or desires or permits it, the more or less informed amateurs who assist her, perhaps the scientifically and technically trained physician, the father, relatives or other third parties who allow, promote, assist or favour the execution of the act and therefore share responsibility, and in a wider but no less strict sense the society whose conditions and mentality directly or indirectly call for such acts and whose laws may even permit them.... Our first contention must be that no pretext can alter the fact that the whole circle of those concerned is in the strict sense engaged in the killing of human life. For the unborn child is from the very first a child. It is still developing and has no independent life. But it is a man [that is, a human being, here and following] and not a thing, nor a mere part of the mother's body. (p. 415)

...Moreover, this child is a man for whose life the Son of God has died, for whose unavoidable part in the guilt of all humanity and future individual guilt He has already paid the price. The true light of the world shines already in the darkness of the mother's womb. (p. 416)

Those who live by mercy will always be disposed to practice mercy, especially to a human being which is so dependent on the mercy of others as the unborn child. (p. 418)

However dangerous it might sound in relation to all that has been said thus far, it must also be said that in faith, and in a vicariously intercessory faith for others too, there is a forgiveness which can be appropriated even for this sin, even for the great modern sin of abortion. (p. 419)

**Karl Barth (1886-1968)**

Church Dogmatics III/4 (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 415-419

## IN PRAISE OF MARRIAGE

Why refrain from that which God instituted, nature sanctions, reason persuades, divine and human laws approve, the consent of all nations endorses and to which the highest examples exhort? What more sweet than to live with her with whom you are united in body and soul, who talks with you in secret affection, to whom you have committed all your faith and your fortune? What in all nature is lovelier? You are bound to friends in affection. How much more to a wife in the highest love, with union of the body, the bond of the sacrament and the sharing of your goods! In other friendships how much there is of simulation and perfidy! Friends flit like swallows. Few continue to the end. But a wife is faithful and only death dissolves marriage, if indeed it does. If you suffer adversity, you have one who will console you and try to make your trouble her own. If you stay at home you have a respite from the tedium of solitude. If you are away you long for a kiss. Absent you desire, returning you rejoice. By marriage the number of your loved ones is increased. You acquire another father and mother. What more charming than to have a little Aeneas who will cherish you in your old age and in whom you are reborn! You say, "Your children may die." But do you think you will have no sorrows if you are celibate? Nothing is more safe, felicitous, tranquil, pleasant, and lovable than marriage.

**Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)**

For All the Saints: A Prayer Book for and by the Church, Volume II (edited by Frederick J. Schumacher with Dorothy A. Zelenko [American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, Delhi, NY, 1995], pp. 943-4; quotes Erasmus of Christendom by Roland H. Bainton [1982])

## NT WRIGHT, ABORTION, AND US

### NT Wright

He is a world-class Biblical theologian, a former bishop in the Church of England, and an author of many books. It is no wonder that, for decades, Wright has been considered by many to have the teaching authority of a Protestant pope. When Protestants—lay leaders, pastors, and/or professors—are locked in theological dispute, they can consult Wright’s writings to attempt to arrive at resolution.

Back in June, NT Wright appeared on the “Ask NT Wright Anything” Podcast, in an “Is abortion ever justified? Can Lucifer be forgiven?” Episode. Among other comments, Wright declared: “There are many, many cases where it is about the mother’s health versus the health of the child or whatever—and particularly...in cases of rape or in cases of incest, there may be a very, very strong argument for saying: ‘This ought never to have happened... And because we do not want to do this in principle, with sorrow and a bit of shame, the best thing to do, as soon as possible, is to terminate this pregnancy.’”

After noting the Jewish and early Christian opposition to abortion, Wright continued: “This is not something we [Christians] should welcome. It is not something with which we should collude. At the same time, there may be certain exceptions—of which, severe deformity might be one, of which certainly incest and rape would be others. In those cases, I would say, the sooner [an abortion can be performed] the better. Because at a certain point, and I am not medically qualified to say at what point, I would draw a line: Then [say], this is a viable human being that should...be cherished.

“Having said that, I do think that sense of respect for God’s creation in all its rich variety is the primary starting point. Even if we then have to say, ‘With sorrow and a certain sense that this is the least worst option in this situation, there may be some cases of exceptions.’” (June 2025, [YouTube.com](#))

(One might question NT Wright’s apparent overconfidence in taking a question on abortion and immediately answering it “on air.” Wright might have been wiser to receive such a question, promise his audience to respond during the next episode, retreat to his study to prepare a thoughtful and careful answer that is historically and ecumenically informed, and respond during the podcast’s next episode. But as they say, hindsight is always 20-20.)

Wright’s podcast comments generated quite a bit of controversy. They also prompted this editor to return to the official teachings on abortion held by The United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church. After repeating some of those teachings below, we will consider them and then pose one question.

### United Methodist Church

During its first post-Covid General Conference in Charlotte, April 23-May 3, 2024, The United Methodist Church adopted a completely rewritten version of its Social Principles, which includes teaching on abortion.

The following two paragraphs are lifted from the larger section on life and abortion.

“Our commitment to the sanctity of human life makes us reluctant to condone abortion. We unconditionally reject it as an acceptable means of birth control or a mechanism for gender selection and other forms of eugenics. We support measures requiring parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood, except in cases of alleged incest.

“We oppose late-term or partial-birth abortion, a process also known as dilation and extraction. We call for the end to this practice, except when the life of the mother is in danger, no other medical treatments are feasible, or when severe abnormalities threaten the viability of the fetus. We recognize that these and other tragic conflicts of life with life may justify decisions to terminate the life of a fetus. In these limited circumstances, we support the legal option of abortion and insist that such procedures be performed by trained medical providers in clean and safe settings.” ([The Book of Discipline](#) [2020/2024], Social Principles, Paragraph 162.III The Social Community, K. Reproductive Health and Abortion, p. 132)

### Global Methodist Church

At its Convening General Conference in September 2024, the Global Methodist Church formally adopted paragraphs on life and abortion. It is apparent that the following paragraphs have been influenced by earlier United Methodist teaching on the same subject.

“2. We believe that life is a holy gift of God whose beginnings and endings are set by God, and that it is the particular duty of believers to protect those who may be powerless to protect themselves, including the unborn, those with disabilities or serious illness, and the aged (*Genesis 2:7, Leviticus 19:32, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:41-44*).

“3. The sacredness of all life compels us to resist the practice of abortion except in the cases of tragic conflicts of life against life when the wellbeing of the mother and the child are at stake. We do not accept abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection, and we call upon all Christians as disciples of the Lord of Life to prayerfully consider how we can support those women facing unintended pregnancies without adequate care, counsel, or resources (*Exodus 22:22-23, Psalm 139:13-16, James 1:27*).” ([Book of Doctrines and Discipline](#) [2024], Paragraph 302. Our Witness to the World, p. 29)

### Exceptions Challenged

When discussing abortion, NT Wright makes the matter of “exceptions” a part of his ethic of life. His exceptions to a life ethic include rape, incest, life of the mother, fetal abnormality, and so on. Drawing attention to the mother and mostly ignoring the little one, Wright’s comments list situations that he calls “exceptions” to his ethic of life—that is, when aborting unborn children should be considered morally permissible. Needless to say, NT Wright will be responding to challengers of his exceptions ethic for a long time to come.

The United Methodist Church acknowledges that

“tragic conflicts of life with life may justify decisions to terminate the life of a fetus. In these limited circumstances, we support the legal option of abortion....” Here exceptions are considered when “tragic conflicts of life with life...may justify

decisions to” abort an unborn child. The result is the same: the claim that there are certain pregnancy circumstances—or exceptions—when choosing abortion should be understandable, legal, and moral. With United Methodist leaders becoming increasingly progressive, in future General Conferences, their teaching on “reproductive health” will probably be amended, expand the number of exceptions, and become more abortion affirming.

The Global Methodist Church (GMC) “resist[s] the practice of abortion except in the cases of tragic conflicts of life against life when the wellbeing of the mother and the child are at stake.” GMC’s one general exception reads: “tragic conflicts of life against life when the wellbeing of the mother and the child are at stake.” Again, according to the Global Methodist Church, this one exception states when abortion can be considered moral by the church. Over time, it is hoped, Global Methodists will raise the bar higher (i.e., more protective of the unborn) in their church’s teaching on abortion.

So, it is clear that NT Wright, The United Methodist Church, and the Global Methodist Church employ the notion of exceptions in their generally pro-life teachings on abortion. And it should be noted that, when it comes to abortion and other life issues, an exceptions ethic is morally superior to an open-season-on-the-vulnerable ethic.

One question comes to mind: **In Christian history before our era, has a theologian or a church ever morally justified the intentional and direct killing of an innocent? The answer is No.** (Such theologians and churches seem busy in our time!)

Though there is no moral justification or reason or excuse for intentionally and directly killing an innocent, including an unborn child, we must remember that God forgives sins—even the sin of murder, even the sin of abortion. Such forgiveness was made possible by the murder of the most Innocent One on a Roman cross 2,000 years ago. Truly, that is Good News for all of us—including all who have participated in taking the lives of innocent, unborn children and then perhaps taken moral refuge in the exceptions noted above. (PTS) ♥

## **CALLED TO ORDAINED MINISTRY? THIS LETTER IS FOR YOU!**

Dear Minding-Your-Own-Business Layperson:

Christ’s Church is in need of a few good men, and a few good women, to enter ordained ministry, become pastors, and serve Christ and His people. Are you sensing

*“In Christian history before our era, has a theologian or a church ever morally justified the intentional and direct killing of an innocent?”*

God’s call? Are you discerning His claim on your life?

After saying Yes to His call, you must spend at least seven (7) years of your life in study. Four (4) years for an undergraduate degree (usually a BA or

BS). And three (3) years for a seminary or divinity-school degree (usually a Masters of Divinity [MDiv]).

Warning! The seminary or divinity-school training can be wrenchingly difficult at times—especially if you have not studied religion as an undergraduate. In theological school, you will sense that your professors are tampering with your faith. Well, they should be. They should be helping you to receive personally, to know deeply, and to propose gladly the faith of the Church catholic. They are preparing you to serve the Church’s faith—not your faith. And by the way, according to the Apostles, that faith includes protecting the unborn child and mother from abortion, teaching the Christian truth about human sexuality, and encouraging marriage to reflect the oneness of Christ and His Church. Theological studies strengthen and toughen you to declare, and defend, the Church’s faith—even in hostile environments. Again, theological study challenges you to become an ecclesiastical Christian and an ecclesiastical pastor—that is, a pastor who serves Christ and His Church, not a pastor who serves his/her own opinions.

As a pastor, you need not worry about money. You will not have too much, and you will not have too little. You will be paid enough so that you can place the greatest majority of your attention on preaching the Word of God, observing the Sacraments commanded by Christ, and ordering the life of the Church—and not have to worry about money.

As a pastor, you will make sacrifices. You will work more than 40 hours a week. Your telephone will ring at the least convenient times. Unexpected funeral services and weddings will cause you to miss, or reschedule, events that had been on your family calendar for months. With God’s help, you will become more patient, creative, and prone to chuckle.

Entering ordained ministry in Christ’s Church, you are embarking on one, grand adventure. Speaking the truth in love, for the sake of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, and for the sake of His Body the Church, you will learn to sacrifice your own comfort and ease. You will discover that you are seldom the most faithful Christian in the room. You will be humbled. You will find yourself among people you do not know and you would not have chosen to know. Occasionally, you will experience joy like never before. All along the way, you will grow in Christ. And you will help a congregation of Christ’s people to grow in Him.

Today, just now, consider Christ’s call to you and His claim on your life. Do not put it off. If you say Yes, you will be taking a most daring and difficult road. You will be taking a road that demands sacrifices—sacrifices that you will not regret making. After all, you make them for

Jesus Christ, His Head and His Body. He laid down His life, in an ugly death upon a bloody cross, for you and for your salvation. Now, He may be calling you into the Church's ordained ministry that most of all points to Him, His death, His resurrection, and His promised coming again.

Be faithful in your current vocations. At the same time, consider the divine calling to minister in Christ's Church that just might be yours.

In Christ,  
(Rev.) Paul T. Stallsworth  
Lifewatch ♥

## FIRE THEN, FIRE NOW? A BOOK REVIEW

Fire at the Founding: Christian Clergy Laid Essential Foundations for Liberty, Righteousness, Morality, and Just and Limited Govern-ment by Thomas W. Jacobson, Second Edition with Bible Study, Discussion, and Sermon Notes [WestBow Press (A Division of Thomas Nelson & Zondervan), Bloomington, IN, 2024] Fire at the Founding is also available at [www.GLCPublications.com](http://www.GLCPublications.com).

"White Male Christian Nationalism" is a weaponized charge aimed at authors (and others) who are on the conservative side of things. It often seeks to demonize them, to strip them of credibility, to give them limited (or no) hearing.

Well, Thomas W. Jacobson is certainly white. He is clearly male. And Christian, even evangelically so. And nationalistic, in that he cares deeply for what is sometimes called "the American experiment in ordered liberty." Since Jacobson checks all the boxes, some would conclude that he is so deeply flawed that we should pay his new book Fire at the Founding no mind. They would be wrong. They would deprive potential readers of a feast of historical knowledge, a touch of inspiration, and a serious call to action.

Abraham Lincoln described the United States of America as an "almost chosen nation."

GK Chesterton depicted the United States as "a nation with the soul of the Church."

In Fire at the Founding, Thomas Jacobson explains why such strong claims have been made by such brilliant men. According to Jacobson, from the time Pilgrims and Puritans took up residence in the New World, preachers proposed Gospel truths that guided the American people and the American nation to strive to be, and to do, what aligned with God's will. Their sermons and writings addressed, for starters, constructive politics more than

combative partisanship. Sin and forgiveness rather than unconditional support. The Lordship of Jesus Christ rather than a tyranny crafted by conspirators. Virtue rather than unrestrained self-expression. Checks and balances over against despotism.

From the 1600s onward, Gospel truths gave Americans, and thus America, a Christian North Star, even if they usually did not follow it. Gospel truths helped shape the American meanings of freedom, religion, righteousness, personal purpose, communal destiny, providence, and final judgment. In fact, Gospel truths significantly formed many of those directly involved with the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War, the United States Constitution, the Civil War, and the expansion of civil rights.

Today Gospel truths, according to Jacobson, can and should be proposed to help the nation take on contemporary corruption in American life—particularly

abortion, which treats the smallest human beings with extreme cruelty and their mothers with extreme indifference. For Gospel truths to have public influence today, clergy and laity must trust and obey the Lord of all life, think clearly, take risks, exercise courage, pursue holiness or faithfulness—and thereby follow those who have gone before with "fire at the founding."

For pastors and priests in our day, that means no more lazy preaching. No partisan-Democratic sermons. No partisan-Republican sermons. No milquetoast, middle-of-the-road sermons. No we-can-never-talk-about-politics sermons. No hiding behind the 1954 Johnson Amendment, that does *not* state (and is *not* now interpreted to mean) that if a preacher so much as mentions politics from the pulpit, the IRS can show up and revoke his congregation's tax-exempt status.

Preaching today can and should and must allow Gospel truths to engage public (including political) life. *Preaching today can be political without being partisan.* Only then will the "fire at the founding" become a "fire in our time." The Bible study, discussion questions, and sermon notes included in Fire at the Founding can bring congregational leaders into thinking, hoping, and dreaming like their fired-up pastor.

I end with a warning. This book is dangerous. It will spark disagreements within you. But those disagreements can stir some rethinking and soul-searching by you, the reader. Even self-examination. At times even repentance. If it does, "[t]he Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." (Psalm 103:8, RSV)

Then "the fire" can start. (PTS) ♥

*PRAY TODAY FOR THE WITNESS  
OF LIFEWATCH*

## PARTISAN POLITICS AND GOD'S WORD AT THE BISHOPS MEETING

The Council of Bishops (COB) of The United Methodist Church met from April 27 until May 2 in Chicago. This is a report on two sermons preached during the most recent meeting of the bishops.

### Partisan Preaching

On April 28, on the ninety-ninth day of the new administration in Washington, DC, Bishop Tracy S. Malone delivered the COB President's Address. Rather predictable from beginning to end, Bp. Malone's address left behind all pretense of non-partisanship when she proclaimed: "... We recognize that we are living in a time when the clarion call for justice has never been more urgent. And the question before the church is this: What will be our faithful response? Every day we are witnessing political violence, divisive authoritarianism, the erosion of civil rights and protections, the marginalization of vulnerable populations, the dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, the mistreatment of immigrants, and extreme injustices that are ruining [?] the very soul of humanity. And it's growing in plain sight! Black and brown communities, immigrants of every race and ethnicity, LGBTQ persons, and countless others are bearing the brunt of this systemic inhumanity. The church is called to be a prophetic voice. Many are suffering under attacks of cruelty and unjust laws and distorted theology. In times like these, the church must be more than polite. We must be prophetic. This is not the time for silence or retreat. This is not the time to whisper when the world needs the church to shout. This is not the time to shrink back when the world is crying out for justice."

Of course Bp. Malone's list of political concerns is repeated, more or less, night after night, on ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, CNN, and MSNBC—and heard, day after day, on NPR. There are, of course, differences between the bishop's presentation and that of the so-called mainstream media. For starters, the bishop throws in some religious lingo, while the legacy media outlets mostly stay away from the stuff. Furthermore, the television and radio news programs sometimes allow time for a rebuttal from a Republican or a conservative; unfortunately, the bishop and the Council of Bishops never model discussion, dialogue, or debate.

Bp. Malone, most mainstream-media outlets, and Democrats agree that there is a political emergency around this world, and it is especially dangerous in the United States today. No wonder there is an uptick in political violence in the United States (and beyond), they would theorize.

Many Methodists would fault the bishop and most

media for their one-sided, partisan-political view of things. More importantly, this editor questions the bishop for cavalierly forcing God into the mold of a progressive Democrat whose main mission in this world is to stop (and defeat) Trump and all Republicans at every turn. By doing this, the bishop is reducing the Almighty Triune God of history, this world, the cosmos, and the world to come to the tiresome categories of partisan politics. Sorry, bishop. God is greater, much greater, than your partisan and transcendence-limited sermon allows.

### Another Kind of Preaching

The next morning, April 29, politics was moved from center stage during the bishops meeting. Bishop Rodel Acdal, of the Philippines Central Conference, did the work. He preached the Word during the Morning Service of Worship. What follows are samples of Bp. Acdal's

faithful and strong sermon: "We are in Eastertide, the season where resurrection still rings in our ears. The Empty Tomb continues to shape how we see the world. Easter reminds us that death is not the end. And neither is division.... Christ comes not just to roll away stones, but also to breathe new life into communities once fractured by fear....

"Friends, unity [in the Church] is not something we manufacture by institutional effort alone. It is something

we receive. [It is something] birthed by the Spirit. The same Spirit [who] raised Jesus from the dead now breathes into the Church a new beginning....

"Easter reminds us: What looks like a tomb may become a womb. Painful transitions may become sacred resurrections. And yet we cannot speak of resurrection without acknowledging the wounds....

"Listen to the risen Christ...with arms outstretched: 'Father, forgive them.' Even in resurrection, Jesus carries His scars—not to shame us, but to heal us. Forgiveness is the medicine that cures and heals. It does not erase history, but it redeems. It redeems [history]. It makes resurrection personal. We cannot be one in Christ if we carry bitterness in our hearts. We cannot move into new beginnings if we remain anchored to all the injuries."

Bp. Acdal then focused on the bishops in the house: "As bishops called to be shepherds of healing, we must be the first to forgive, to bless, to model reconciliation. Let us remind the church that resurrection is not just a doctrine. It is a way of living. And that forgiveness is [our] work.

"So what is our call [from God] in this season? Lead with Pentecost courage. No shrinking from chains, but stepping into the unknown. We must reflect hope. Listen with Christ-like humility—not just to correct, but to understand. Forgive, like the risen Lord—not out of weakness, but from the strength of grace. A church without forgiveness becomes a courtroom. And a leader without grace becomes a tyrant in a robe or collar. Pray for

*"... the bishop is reducing the Almighty Triune God of history, this world, the cosmos, and the world to come to the tiresome categories of partisan politics. Sorry, bishop. God is greater, much greater, than your partisan and transcendence-limited sermon allows."*

the Spirit to move—not just in our churches, but in us.

“The unity we proclaim is not organizational; it is Incarnational. It is Christ alive in us, making us one. That is not the end of something. That is resurrection’s next chapter. Let us be a global church that breathes with many lungs, speaks with many tongues. But...moved by one Spirit. Let us be bishops! Bishops who do not try to control the wind, but who hoist our sails in faith. Let us pray not simply ‘make us one,’ but ‘make us Yours.’ So that in Christ, by the Spirit and for the world, we may truly be one.

“Christ is risen. Christ is rising still in His Church. Amen. Amen.” (The above quotations are transcribed from videos posted on the Council of Bishop’s Facebook website.)

Hearing Bp. Acidal’s sermon, the bishops (and others) jumped to their feet and offered a grateful, enthusiastic standing ovation. It seemed that the assembly was ranking a truly prophetic preaching of God’s Word (which lacked only a call to repentance for the bishops’ responsibility in causing the recent schism) over a rather fevered, blue-tinted presentation of American partisan politics. (PTS) ♥

## WITNESSING FOR LIFE AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Mr. Robert A. Rivers is a member of Oxford United Methodist Church in Oxford, NC. Preparing to attend the 2025 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference, he wrote and submitted a resolution entitled “Opposition to Abortion Beyond 12 Weeks Post Fertilization.” Now available on the North Carolina Conference website, the Rivers resolution is quite thoughtful. It contains much accurate information on abortion in our time.

On the last morning of Annual Conference (Saturday, June 14), just before the Service for the Ordering of Ministry, this resolution (along with three others) was debated. During the debate, your editor offered the following brief speech in support of the Rivers resolution: “In 2021, I wrote an article for United Methodist News Service. In it, I mentioned the over 60 million abortions performed in the US since 1973. A shocked journalist called me and requested evidence. I responded with statistics from Guttmacher....

“[This resolution] understands pregnancy in trimesters. It opposes abortion in the Second and Third Trimesters—that is, abortion after 12 weeks (with an exception).

“Around 46,000 abortions/year occur in North Carolina. Nearly 93% of them (around 43,000) occur during the First Trimester. Around 7% (or 3,000) during the Second and Third Trimesters.

“This resolution challenges us United Methodists to remember who we are. We are Christians, first and last. We trust and obey Jesus Christ. We are in the Body of Jesus Christ. From the time of ‘primitive Christianity,’ the Church ministered for life. From its beginning, the Church opposed abortion. That is who we are. We stand for, and with, the most vulnerable—the unborn child and mother.

That’s what Augustine and Wesley, Bonhoeffer and Barth, did.

“Remember our identity in Jesus Christ and His Church! Help protect little ones and their mothers! Vote for Resolution III!”

After the debate ended, the vote was taken. The Rivers resolution was not adopted. However, by writing and proposing it, Mr. Rivers made sure that several hundred United Methodists from eastern North Carolina were confronted with the awful frequency that abortion is used to solve problems in our time and place. They also heard God calling His people to stand with the unborn child and mother—even though they responded, “No thanks.” Father, they know not what they do...yet! (PTS) ♥

## SURRENDER

You know, or should know, that Jonathan Rourmie plays Jesus of Nazareth in “The Chosen.” “The Chosen” is a film series on Jesus and His twelve disciples. The series—in theaters, on television, and on digital platforms—is quite popular. For example, on YouTube, its programs have over 600,000,000 views!

Appearing on “The View” on January 30, 2024, Rourmie was reminded by a questioner that, even with occasional acting and speaking (or voice-over) jobs, he, as a young man, could not pay his bills. Things became so bad for him that he considered giving up his performing career.

With candor, Rourmie responded: “Well, you know, I worked here in New York City after college in production. I was a location scout. That was how I made a decent living. I had started working with MTV’s ‘Celebrity Deathmatch’ [2000-2002]. It was the first acting job I ever had. So from that point I always had a curiosity like, ‘I wonder what this would look like if it went further?’

“And fast forward to the housing market collapsing in 2008. I had booked a few other jobs. I started booking television. I said, ‘Well, this is an opportunity to see if I can actually make this work.’

“So I moved to LA. And for eight years, I did not have the safety of the job that I had left in New York. [There were] different unions and all sorts of complications to do the same thing in LA. But that is not why I was going to LA.... So I had to do all these other jobs. I drove ride share. I worked in catering, and all those other things I had never done. I had gotten to the point that I was broke. I was out of money. I was out of food, out of even government assistance for food. And the only thing I hadn’t done at that point, the only thing left to do, was to get on my knees and surrender my entire life and my career and everything that I had up to that point over to God. Because there was not anything, I realized, that I could do on my own.

“I was raised in the faith, from a child [baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church and later converted to the Roman Catholic Church]. But it was not until after that moment...that I said, ‘Jesus, I surrender myself to You. Take care of everything.’”

That very day, Roumie was blessed with a “financial miracle.” Three months later he joined the cast of “The Chosen.” Much later came his appearance on “The View.”

Most of the time, surrender to God does not result in spectacular miracles. Unexpected money does not arrive. Applause does not mount. Clicks do not multiply. But a deep peace appears. And so does strength for the challenges and battles that are sure to come. Jonathan Roumie and countless others, who have surrendered their lives to God, know that.

(You can watch Jonathan Roumie on “The View” on [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com).) ♥

## LETTERS TO LIFEWATCH

May 22, 2025 [email]

Dear Paul,

Just tried to call you to commend you on the latest Lifewatch (6/1/2025), which came yesterday. Superb! Just superb! I was so appreciative of your addressing the change or reversal made by the late Richard Hays, not long before his passing. That has needed to be done, and you have done it beautifully.

I was quite saddened when I learned Richard had changed his point of view. I think you dealt with that so very well—with sensitivity and compassion for him, with appreciation for his contribution as professor and author, and then by graciously expressing your disappointment at his change on this critical issue. I thought how you handled it was just outstanding and typical of you. Always gracious, but always principled. Well done.

I am attaching a piece I did a little while ago. I think I began it thinking of offering it to Good News, but it became too long. On p. 6, I mention Pope Benedict XVI, who as Cardinal Ratzinger wrote as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in 1986, an episcopal letter about “pastoral care of homosexual persons.” He wrote this: “We wish to make it clear that departure from the Church’s teaching or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care, *is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral.* The neglect of the Church’s position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve.” (emphasis JH’s)

I thought that was a profound truth!

Do know how grateful I am for you and for your faithfulness to the apostolic faith.

Your friend and brother in Christ,

Jim

[The Reverend Dr. James V. Heidinger II/President and Publisher Emeritus Good News Magazine/Wilmore, KY]  
June 2 [postal note]

*“Most of the time, surrender to God does not result in spectacular miracles. Unexpected money does not arrive. Applause does not mount. Clicks do not multiply. But a deep peace appears. And so does strength for the challenges and battles that are sure to come.”*

Dear Paul,

I was delighted to receive the latest installment of Lifewatch. I’m glad that you found the ECT [Evangelicals and Catholics Together] statement on the Church useful. I especially enjoyed your remembrance of Richard Hays: generous and honest.

Keep up the good fight!

Rusty

[Dr. R. R. Reno, Editor/First Things/New York, NY]

*Responding to my emailed request to publish his note (which I had included in the request), Dr. Reno replied: “Looks good to me, Paul. Imprimatur.” Well, kind of.... (PTS) ♥*

## YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

• **Thank you for your good, solid generosity.** Your gifts—prayers, notes, and checks—fortify and advance this ministry. Your faithful monetary gifts help this editor concentrate on Lifewatch’s witness and mission. Basically, you help this ministry to pay the bills generated by the Lifewatch newsletter.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your support of all kinds!

• **Welcome Rev. John C. Wright, of Heathsville, VA, to the Lifewatch Advisory Board.** Rev. Wright pastors Fairfield’s Methodist Church in Burgess, VA and Afton Methodist Church in Ophelia, VA. Rev. Wright, we are most grateful to have you on board!

• **Also, heartfelt thanks to Mr. Donald T. Siress, of O’Fallon, MO, the Lifewatch treasurer for many, many years.** Each year, for decades, he faithfully and accurately reported on Lifewatch’s finances. Mr. Siress, thank you for your years of good service!

• **The Reverend Dr. Russell E. Richey crossed the Jordan on January 19, 2025.** Soon thereafter, his Service of Death and Resurrection was observed. Later, on April 5, an informal celebration of his life was held at Trinity United Methodist Church in downtown Durham, NC.

Dr. Richey, or “Russ” to many, was committed to serving Christ and His Church. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Ordained an elder in The United Methodist Church, he taught and wrote Methodist history with a flair. For years, he was the William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. From 2000-2006, he served as the Dean of Candler at Emory. Toward the end of his life, he rejoined the faculty at Duke Divinity School and was a research fellow at its Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition.

Russ was often academic and earnest, always cheerful, and sometimes mischievous. From Lifewatch’s

beginnings, he was a reader. Occasionally he responded to articles and encouraged its editor. (He once joked that the newsletter's point of view was influenced by the thought of Rousseau!) As a good-natured, liberal United Methodist, he knew the importance of friendship in Christ, and vigorous theological debate in the denomination, throughout its institutions, and especially in its seminaries.

May Russ Richey rest in God's peace—until the Father sends His Son Jesus Christ, in the company of the Spirit, into history to radiate glory, to win absolute victory over the enemies of life, and to resurrect those who have been laid to rest.

● **First United Methodist Church of Wilson, NC worshipped faithfully on Ash Wednesday (March 5, 2025).** The Service of Worship employed this prayer by William Barclay (1907-1978, minister in the Church of Scotland and professor of Biblical interpretation at the University of Glasgow): "Save us, O God,/From the blindness, which is not even aware that it is sinning;/From the pride, which cannot admit that it is wrong;/From the self-will, which can see nothing but its own way;/From the self-righteousness, which can see no flaw within itself;/From the callousness, which has sinned so often that it has ceased to care;/From the defiance, which is not even sorry for its sins;/From the evasion, which always puts the blame on someone or something else;/From the heart so hardened, that it cannot repent.

"Give us at all times, eyes which are open to our faults; a conscience which is sensitive and quick to warn; a heart that cannot sin in peace, but is moved to regret and remorse. So grant that being truly penitent we may be truly forgiven, so that we may find that your love is great enough to cover all our sins; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

If that prayer does not move us to a moist eye and a repentant heart, we might need some serious, pastoral attention. Immediately.

● **In June, the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association (AMA) voted to reject moving toward "assisted suicide" and, therefore, reaffirmed its current position against the immoral practice.** Since 1994, the AMA Code of Medical Ethics has stated that "[p]hysician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks." (Patients Rights Action Fund, "American Medical Association Reaffirms Opposition to Assisted Suicide," [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), June 9, 2025)

● **The Michigan March for Life is on November 6, 2025 (Thursday) at the State Capitol Building (100 N.**

**Capitol Avenue) in Lansing.** A pre-rally concert begins at 10:00 a.m.; a rally at 11:00 a.m.; and the march at 12:00 noon. To register, go to [marchforlife.org/michigan/](https://marchforlife.org/michigan/). [Lifewatch](https://www.lifenews.com) readers in Michigan, spread the word, make plans, and show up!

● **In the US, the political struggle over abortion has of course moved to the states.** So, please find out where and when your state's March for Life will take place. (Google "2025-6 March for Life in [your state].") Then inform your church, friends, neighbors, and enemies about the march! And be there!

*After years of performing and promoting abortions, [Dr. Bernard Nathanson] declared: "A favorite pro-abortion tactic is to insist that the definition of when life begins is impossible; that the question is a theological or moral or philosophical one, anything but a scientific one.... As a scientist, I know, not believe [but] know, that human life begins at conception."*

● **"The Memorial for Unborn Children" is a 2010 sculpture by the Slovak artist Hartin Hudacek.** It features a mother—on bent knees, with her head bowed and buried in her hands—grieving over her lost child. The child stands in front of mother and in love reaches out to her. This lovely sculpture especially encourages those who have lost children to abortion, miscarriage, stillbirth, and other

tragedies. To see this beautiful and hopeful work of art, google its title, and find an image on the Internet.

● **Dr. Bernard Nathanson (1926-2011) was once an abortionist and a pro-abortion activist.** Then he converted to Christ and His Church, and he became a doctor for life. After years of performing and promoting abortions, he declared: "A favorite pro-abortion tactic is to insist that the definition of when life begins is impossible; that the question is a theological or moral or philosophical one, anything but a scientific one. Fetology [the medical study and treatment of the fetus in the uterus] makes it undeniably evident that life begins at conception and requires all the protection and safeguards that any of us enjoy.... As a scientist, I know, not believe [but] know, that human life begins at conception." (Dr. Bernard Nathanson, "An Ex-Abortionist Speaks," Catholic News Agency website under "Resources")

In conversations about life and abortion, never overlook or give up on this biological truth: Human life does indeed begin at conception.

● **Colorado's Boulder Abortion Clinic has closed.** Notorious for its late-term abortions and its late-term abortionist Warren Hern, the former clinic informs its website visitors: "BOULDER ABORTION CLINIC IS CLOSED/no longer seeing patients at this time." (Sarah Neely, Operation Rescue, "Breaking: After 50 Years of Carnage, Warren Hern's Gruesome Full-Term Abortion Clinic Is Closed," [operationrescue.org](https://www.operationrescue.org), April 23, 2025; reposted as "Abortion Biz That Killed Babies in Abortions Up to Birth for 50 Years Permanently Closes," [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), April 23, 2025)



Only a report on Warren Hern's change of heart and mind could improve this story. For that, prayers can be offered.

● **Planned Parenthood (PP), nicknamed “Big Abortion,” is on hard times.** It is now well known that “Planned Parenthood President Makes \$904,000 Killing Babies in Abortion,” and that PP affiliates’ CEOs pull in over \$300,000/year (McKenna Snow, [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), March 22, 2025). Perhaps enormous salaries are necessary to keep PP executives in place. By April, PP had closed ten (10) of its abortion clinics in 2025 (Sarah Neely, “Celebrating Holy Week and Ten Planned Parenthoods Closing—Praise Be to God!,” [operationrescue.org](https://www.operationrescue.org), April 17, 2025; reposted as “Planned Parenthood Abortion Biz Has Closed 10 Centers in 2025,” [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), April 17, 2025). Word has gotten out that PP’s clinics are outnumbered 15 to 1 by community-health centers, which include federally-qualified and rural-health centers (“Women Have Real Choices,” Charlotte Lozier Institute, [lozierinstitute.org/realchoices](https://lozierinstitute.org/realchoices)). When PP’s 2024 annual report came out in May, Michael New posted on social media: “Over the past 10 years: Abortions: 22.8% increase/Taxpayer Funding: 49.9% increase/Pregnancy Tests: 16.4% decrease/Prenatal Care: 62.8% decrease/Cancer Screenings: 54.4% decrease. More tax dollars, more abortions, less health care.” (Steven Ertelt, “Planned Parenthood Makes Over \$2 Billion Killing a Record 402,000 Babies in Abortions,” [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), May 12, 2025) Furthermore, “Planned Parenthood Kills the Babies of 97% of Pregnant Women Who Go There” (Brad Mattes, [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), June 20, 2025). The “One Big Beautiful Bill,” that was recently signed into law, defunded Planned Parenthood for a year. That means PP loses more than \$700,000—if current court challenges are overcome. Finally.

● **Unfortunately, chemical abortions (which use pills) now outnumber surgical abortions in the US.** Approximately 60% of abortions are chemical, and 40% surgical. Why? The pills are convenient. They can be prescribed by telehealth. They can be shipped into states that restrict abortion. And they do what they are manufactured, sold, and bought to do: They take the lives of the littlest ones—in the privacy of home.

● **The abortion pill, according to its sellers and supporters, is quite safe.** ““Serious adverse reactions’ are very rare (one half of one percent [.005]),” they say. Not so, say Hall and Anderson. Jamie Bryan Hall and Ryan T. Anderson—researchers based at the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC) in Washington, DC—examined data associated with nearly 866,000 insurance claims, that involved the abortion pill, between 2017 and 2023. In the words of Dr. Randall K. O’Bannon, who heads up National Right to Life Committee’s education and research: “counting only those with a report of significant or severe complications, EPPC researchers found 11% (or .11)

reporting sepsis, infection, hemorrhage, hospitalization, or some other issue that officially qualified as a ‘serious adverse event.’” (Dave Andrusko, “Liberal Media Ignores New Study Showing Abortion Pill Hurting Tens of

Thousands of Women,” [LifeNews.com](https://www.lifenews.com), May 5, 2025)

Let’s be clear about that: The abortion pill is 22 times more dangerous than the public has been told.

● **The killing of children, unborn and born, is hardly a new phenomenon.** The Roman Empire once controlled what we now call England. Roman soldiers were stationed there to patrol the empire’s borders. They used wooden “postcards” to write home, and only a few of them have survived. One was found at a Roman fort in Vindolanda. Written by a Roman soldier to his wife, it reads: “...I beg and plead with you to take care of our little child, and as soon as we receive wages, I will send them to you. In the meantime, if (good fortune to you!) you give birth, if it’s a boy, let it live. If it is a girl, expose it.” That is, if the infant is a girl, put her outside in the elements to die.

In response to this common practice, early Christians went to places where infants were left unprotected to die, took them home, and raised them in the Church to be Christians. The rescuers’ witness helped change the Roman culture of death into a Roman culture of life, in which infanticide was outlawed. (Martha Shuping email, February 14, 2025; “Vindolanda” article, Wikipedia; and Kirk Walden, “How Early Christians Resisted Infanticide by Loving Their Neighbors,” [christianpost.com](https://www.christianpost.com), March 12, 2019)

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# Lifewatch

Taskforce of  
United Methodists on  
Abortion and Sexuality

2400 Foxcroft Road NW, Wilson NC 27896

09/01/25

- \* NT Wright veers exceptionally wrong on abortion
- \* Witnessing for life at an Annual Conference that still votes “no”
- \* Partisan politics and bishops echoing MSNBC

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● **Think “regionalization.”** All United Methodist Annual Conferences considered it, when they voted on the constitutional amendments earlier this year. The voting results will be known soon. If the regionalization amendment passes, The United Methodist Church will give each region of the denomination more say in its life together.

This came to mind when reading Catholic-lay-theologian George Weigel’s words: “The content of the ‘one’ in the Nicene affirmation of ‘one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church’ is a unity in faith: a unity in the truths we know from revelation and reason. Local-option Catholicism is not Catholicism. National Catholicism is not Catholicism. The truths of faith—which include the moral truths that facilitate human flourishing and beatitude—are universal.” (“Unity in What?,” [firstthings.com](http://firstthings.com), May 15, 2024)

Now, let’s see if I get Mr. Weigel’s drift: “Regionalized Methodism is not Methodism.” Some of us believe that is true. If regionalization does not pass, The United Methodist Church will maintain a greater semblance of unity. In today’s fractured world, that is not nothing.

- *Vulnerari praesidio.* “Protect the most vulnerable.”
- *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* “Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail.” ♥

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