

## From the President:



I never thought I would do this

*by Don Elliott*

**I** never thought I would do this, but I have resigned from the board of Presbyterians Pro-Life.

**I never thought I would do this** because working with PPL has been a joy and encouragement to me for over 20 years. It has been an aspect of my call in ministry where I worked as a servant being fulfilled with my contributions and where I worked as a partner experiencing the reality that my contributions only made sense in the context of a team.

**I never thought I would do this** because PPL was active and effective in the call to reformation and renewal in the PC(USA). The need for spiritual change in the PC(USA) has been evident for decades, but for pro-life Presbyterians the pro-choice policy of the church and the pro-abortion bias of many church leaders only accentuated the spiritual deficit. PPL gave me a definite place to plug in and do something when I did not think I could do anything.

**I never thought I would do this** because my call has been within the PCUS, where I was ordained in 1973, and then in the PC(USA) since 1983. That call has not always been pleasant, but it has been satisfying. Tension between denominational developments and congregational life had become the air I breathed and the food I ate.

My resigning from the board of PPL has absolutely nothing to do with PPL. As a matter of fact, things have not been better at PPL. Marie Bowen is giving excellent leadership as Executive Director. A new Associate Director, Lauren Bodnar has recently been called. The board is as involved as ever. Opportunities for ministry now and expansion into the future are plentiful. The PC(USA) needs PPL for setting the pace in giving a pro-life witness. Plans for the 2008 GA are already underway.

**This has everything to do with God leading me in a new direction.** I am supporting the recommendation of my Session at First Presbyterian Church in Corinth, Mississippi to seek dismissal from the PC(USA) and go to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. We have many steps to take before that recommendation is acted upon, but that is where I am right now.

**I am in a place I did not seek and in many ways did not want.** But it has become clear to me that the Lord has been leading during a very difficult time in my ministry to something new. Not everything about this something new has been enjoyable. If someone speaks only of good reasons, positive feelings and great excitement when one moves from one denominational family to another, they are not being totally honest. There is more involved in the call of God than conscience and conviction. There are always aspects that are uncomfortable.

There is the realization of newness where the familiar is left behind for the uncertainty of the unfamiliar. There is also the awareness of disappointing some old friends as one moves into the circle of some new friends.

**Presbyterians Pro-Life has helped me more than I can express.** PPL rescued me from a time of despair after 1983 when I could not believe my denomination declared, “Abortion could be faithfulness to God.” (Covenant and Creation paper) When I thought I was all alone, PPL encouraged me by opening my eyes to the truth that “thousands had not bowed the knee to Baal” (I Kings 19:18). PPL’s efforts at every General Assembly since 1985 have revealed to me the depth of spiritual need in the PC(USA) as well as the depth of the commitment of the renewal movement to focus on that need. Every time I have gathered with PPL people, my ministry has been enriched, my life has been corrected, and my soul has been refreshed.

But as best as I know the call of God, I am in a new season in my ministry. I am discovering some things about my Lord and myself that baffle me, and I trust they are true to Him Who said,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

**I want to be really clear about something.** Even though I am doing something I never thought I would do in resigning from the board of Presbyterians Pro-Life and going in a new direction denominationally, I do not believe it is for everyone. I found myself in some unique and special circumstances that were marked primarily by a struggle with consciences before God. But that struggle with conscience may not be the same everywhere.

**But I do believe that there is still one matter of conscience that should be for everyone,** and that is the biblical call to stand for life. That stand for life does not change wherever the Lord might lead us, to different congregations or different denominations. It is demanded as we depend upon the Creator of all life, as we obey the commandments of God, as we trust in the Redeemer as the way, the truth and the life, and as we live for the Lord in the confusion of and conflict with our culture.

Even though I am doing something I never thought I would do in regard to PPL and the PC(USA), I trust there is something I will never do—stop standing for life.

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[Return to Index Page](#)

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