



November 2007

Something good came out of the 2006 General Assembly in Birmingham!

The Health Issues Committee of the 217th General Assembly in Birmingham engaged in a highly productive discussion about abortion which resulted in two positive actions:

1. A statement that late-term viable babies ought not to be aborted,

We affirm that the lives of viable unborn babies—those well-developed enough to survive outside the womb if delivered—ought to be preserved and cared for and not aborted. In cases where problems of life or health of the mother arise in a pregnancy, the church supports efforts to protect the life and health of both the mother and the baby. When late-term pregnancies must be terminated, we urge decisions intended to deliver the baby alive. We look to our churches to provide pastoral and tangible support to women in problem pregnancies and to surround these families with a community of care. We affirm adoption as a provision for women who deliver children they are not able to care for, and ask our churches to assist in seeking loving, Christian, adoptive families.

2. and a recommendation that presbyteries ought to study abortion using scripture, prayer, and other resources.

To commend the Presbytery of Mississippi for its use of group discernment concerning abortion, and recommend that all presbyteries create task forces to replicate their process of prayer and study, that hearts and minds may be open to God’s wisdom through Scripture, other resources, and one another, and to direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate this action to the presbyteries.

BUT, did these actions make a difference? Yes, and no. It may depend you YOU! After PPL drew staff attention to the need for updating the website, the late-term abortion statement was included on the [PC\(USA\) website](#). The statement was added to the Board of Pensions [Affiliated Benefits Program Healthcare Coverage](#) booklet, page 22-23, after PPL brought the updated policy to the attention of BOP staff. But coverage of claims for late-term abortions continue under the Medical Benefits Plan. When PPL asked if that would change, a staff member responded quickly saying that the BOP is not expected to ‘police’ claims.

Few presbyteries act on GA recommendation to study abortion. The 2006 General Assembly found value in a process of study used by a task force at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi to study abortion. The GA recommended that each presbytery create a task force to “replicate” the “process of prayer and study” used by Covenant. The desire of the Assembly was that “hearts and minds may be open to God’s wisdom through Scripture, other resources, and one another”. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly was directed to “communicate this action to the presbyteries.”

Presbyterians Pro-Life Statement of Purpose

Presbyterians Pro-Life seeks to be a prophetic witness to the Presbyterian Church (USA) upholding the sacred value of human life and the family. We believe the Scriptures teach that God, who made us in His own image, has forbidden us to shed innocent blood.

Therefore, Presbyterians Pro-Life is committed to protecting the right to life of every human being from the moment of fertilization to the moment of natural death. In decisions about life and death, the sanctity of life of both mother and child must be respected, and every effort to preserve their lives should be made. This leads us to stand against abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and any other practice which would devalue human life.

Presbyterians Pro-Life is convinced that a return to the Biblical teaching concerning the sacred value of the family is essential to recovering respect for the sacred value of individual human lives. God has ordained the family, the basic social unit of all human institutions, to propagate, protect and nurture human life.

Presbyterians Pro-Life is committed to strengthening the bonds of family love and nurture, and to protecting innocent life.

The Stated Clerk's office responded politely to PPL's reminders that the 2006 GA had asked that a letter be sent to presbyteries. Rather than sending a separate communication, however, they included the information in a multi-page mass email to presbyteries that addressed multiple GA actions.

PPL was concerned that presbyteries might overlook this important recommendation and followed up with phone calls to every presbytery. We learned that only 3 presbyteries have taken action to create a task force to study abortion! It is a disappointing number. It is hard to pinpoint the reasons for such an astonishing level of apathy about an issue that takes the lives of 4,000 unborn babies a day. Did Presbyteries know about it? Are Presbytery staff members too overwhelmed with transition in the denomination? Would more presbyteries respond if pro-life Presbyterians actively volunteer to help?

PPL would like to encourage YOU to contact your presbytery council and request that they respond to this GA recommendation by initiating a task force to study abortion through scripture and prayer. State specifically the ways you would be willing to help! This action by the 2006 General Assembly is a significant opportunity to shed the light of Scripture on the holocaust of abortion. It won't happen in your presbytery without you! Contact Lauren at 412-487-1990 or pplbodnar@verizon.net for more information.

The Danger of Clergy Who Neglect God's Calling

By Richard F. Brondyke

A new and disturbing trend has emerged in current debates over euthanasia and assisted suicide. With the recent defeat of a euthanasia bill in the California legislature, an announcement was made about the formation of a "counseling" group whose goal is to provide help and information for people who want to commit suicide in a less direct manner that gets around state law. Rev. John Brooke, a United Church of Christ minister from Cotati, is one of the organizers of the new End of Life Consultation Service.

Although our current culture often disturbs us with its laying aside of sacred values, it is particularly disturbing when Christian clergy are involved in the effort. We would do well to remind ourselves of similar trends amongst medical professionals, particularly physicians. The old values espoused in the Hippocratic oaths that forbade any notion of doctor-assisted suicide have been laid aside by supposedly "enlightened" medical schools as they administer newly edited versions of that ancient oath. Just over a year ago my wife and I watched with pride but also grave concern, as Johns Hopkins, one of the foremost medical schools in the country, administered such a watered-down oath to our daughter as she began her medical career. Be forewarned: Doctors of today may have different concerns than doctors had 50 years ago; no longer do oaths taken in many secular universities contain prohibitions against doctors participating in either abortion or doctor-assisted suicide.

And now we are discovering that there are some clergy (we hope not many!) who apparently are changing their understanding of what it means to be in ministry. The sacred vows we took at ordination surely invite us, even demand, that the focus of our ministry to parishioners is to bring them into a relationship with God

James 3:1

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 18

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Genesis 9:6

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."

1 Peter 5:2

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

Acts 20:28

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

2 Timothy 1:8

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

and to help them grow through every stage in life to be obedient disciples of Jesus Christ. Traditional ministry has included sitting beside servants of the Lord as they have struggled through the end of life, consoling family as their loved ones “walk through the valley of the shadow of death”, and pointing both patients and loved ones to the Lord who never leaves us or forsakes us.

Now we discover some clergy abandoning those traditional roles (weren't they Biblical roles??) and replacing them with ones in which clergy advise people how to kill themselves without getting in trouble with the law. Surely such an approach is to abandon birthrights for a mess of pottage, and to be in violation of sacred vows of ordination. The notion that that such “clergy” have abandoned being doctors of “theology” – (theology is a “word” about “God”) – in favor of being doctors of death probably never crossed their minds. The Bible’s warning that as pastors we will be judged with more severity ([James 3:1](#)) has apparently been neglected in favor of doing what is “chic” in the contemporary culture.

As pastors, we need to be sure that our ethics are grounded in God’s Word that calls us to value life because the human being is created in the image of God ([Genesis 1:27](#)). We are agents of the new creation ([2 Corinthians 5:17, 18](#)), not agents of destruction of the human body (note the warning of [Genesis 9:6](#), let alone the prohibitions of the sixth commandment!). To help others make difficult decisions at the end of life is no doubt our responsibility, but to abandon Biblical decision-making in face of the pressures of our age shows at the least sloppy ethical theology, at worst a blatant disregard of the Word of God.

As pastors, we are called to serve the flock ([1 Peter 5:2](#)), to shepherd the flock ([1 Peter 5:2](#), [Acts 20:28](#)), to watch over the flock ([Act 20:28](#)), not to find ways to disregard God’s truth in the midst of suffering and pain. Paul urges us not to be “ashamed to testify about our Lord” ([2 Timothy 1:8](#)), but to “keep a pattern of sound teaching ([2 timothy 1:13](#)), to “correctly handle the word of truth” ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)), and to “preach the Word ([2 Tim. 4:2](#)). As ministers of Word and sacrament we must be sure that our ministry is grounded in the truth of God which we are bold to declare, not in the whims and latest fads of our culture. Let us be very careful that we do not find ourselves encouraging the wolves who would savage the flock ([Acts 20:29](#)) by our disregard of the very truth we are called to defend.

Related Articles: [California Group Will Do Assisted Suicide Counseling After Bill Failed](#), by Steven Ertelt, LifeNews.com (www.lifenews.com/bio2233.html)

[California Medical Association Rejects Assisted Suicide Neutrality](#), LifeNews.com, Nov 5, 2007 (www.lifenews.com/bio2261.html)

2 Timothy 1:13

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Acts 20:29

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, Crossway Bibles, Good News Publishers, ESV text edition: 2007

PPL needs your help!

At the recent board meeting of the PPL Board of Directors, members re-affirmed their Stated Purpose_(page 1) “*to be a prophetic witness to the PC (USA), upholding the sacred value of human life and the family.*”

We believe God intends for us to do the work of witness **with** you, not **for** you. We need your participation in the work of witness and your financial support. Will you consider giving a special year-end gift to the work of PPL? You may contribute online using **Paypal at www.ppl.org** or mail your gift to PPL, 3942 Middle Rd, Allison Park, PA 15101.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

is January 22, 2008.

PPL has materials on our website

to help you plan a special service

focusing on the value of every human life

as revealed in Scripture.

Visit www.ppl.org to download and print

SOHLS materials from PPL.