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## Presbyterians Pro-Life responds to violent death of abortionist

Presbyterians Pro-Life deplores the assassination of late-term abortionist, George Tiller, who was shot yesterday in the lobby of a Kansas church. We extend our condolences and prayers to his family, friends, and pray for the church congregation who witnessed this senseless act of violence.

PPL affirms the value of every human life; our work is directed toward helping the Presbyterian Church (USA) restore its own biblical and confessional belief that every innocent human life deserves protection and care. We abhor the violence of abortion and surely Dr. Tiller was a long-time participant in the killing of many innocent pre-born children, but in our deep commitment to protect unborn life, we disavow all use of violent means of protest or retaliation.

Government has a responsibility to protect innocent life and to bring to justice those who take the lives of others. When civil government fails to fulfill its role, individuals must leave judgment to the hands of God, the creator and owner of our lives. While we are gravely concerned over the loss of unborn children and want to see all children welcomed and protected, The Bible is clear in its teaching that we must leave all vengeance to God. (Romans 12:19b & Deuteronomy 32:35).

The following excerpt was attached to a similar [press release by PPL](#) in 1998. It is an edited version of a statement by PPL's former executive director, Terry Schlossberg, for a symposium sponsored by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, entitled "Killing Abortionists." It was published in the journal *First Things* in December, 1994.

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"The philosophy undergirding the slaying of abortionists is one of anarchy. It opposes the role of government expounded in the reformed tradition of our church. It is correct to assume that efforts to protect unborn children ought to be consistent with those to protect the born. But it is deadly error to assume that individuals, in place of civil government, bear responsibility to take up the sword, so to speak, in defense of the innocent. Those who take matters into their own hands join the ranks of the guilty and separate themselves from biblical teaching when they choose to advocate killing abortionists or to become executioners.

"The biblical and confessional tradition assigns to the civil government the role of keeping order, maintaining justice, protecting the innocent, and "draw[ing] the sword," when necessary, "against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers . . . and all those whom God has commanded [it] to punish and even to execute" (Second Helvetic Confession). John Calvin taught that even evil government is to be preferred over anarchy. He argued that "[I]t is better to live under the most savage tyrant than without any government at all" (Commentary on Daniel 4).

"The Supreme Court and the current Administration have frustrated the proper role of government and prevented the protection of the unborn by just and legal means. But the philosophy underlying the killing of abortionists abandons the effort to restore government's proper role and, instead, usurps it. Those who hold this view are not adhering to God's higher law. They put themselves above all law. The

effect of their view is to undermine government and promote a situation that leads inevitably to serious disorder in society.

"In giving a free hand to abortionists, the government has failed to restrain evil. But Christians and other American citizens cannot overcome this evil by undermining the role of government. Those who take that course can expect only to bring judgment on themselves even as those who take the lives of the innocent are under judgment.

"We should not lose our sense of shock and abhorrence at the systematic and regular killing of the unborn simply because it is a daily occurrence in American life. Neither should we forget the slippery slope that is already claiming the lives of other weak and vulnerable persons. Responding to a rise in abortions, the Presbyterian Church in 1869 spoke out against it as a "crime against God and against nature." That assembly went on to exhort pastors to end their silence and tolerance of the practice, and "endeavor by all *proper* means to stay the floods of impurity and cruelty" (emphasis added).

"As St. Paul wrote: "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments . . . , not people (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). "To do no harm," and to pray for those who do, is the heart of the movement that springs from a desire to protect and care for all our neighbors in the human community."

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