



Redstone Presbytery seeks protection of late-term babies in the womb

Overture calls for a change in PC(USA)abortion policy

Current policy allows abortion of babies who could live outside the womb

The lives of babies of the same gestational age as Hope Natalie Mattina (right) at her birth are not protected by the current policy of the PC(USA). Hope's mother, Jill, was diagnosed with HELLP Syndrome, a serious and potentially life-threatening condition that can occur in pregnancy. Current PC(USA) policy supports abortion in such cases. Babies who could be born alive are turned in the womb and partially born feet first, with only the emergence of the head prevented. The skull of the very much alive baby, is then punctured without benefit of anesthesia and the skull contents suctioned out to collapse the skull for easier removal of the baby's head. This procedure is never safer for the mother than a live birth.

In 2004, six presbyteries asked the General Assembly to change their position of support for this procedure. For three consecutive years before that presbyteries have asked the G.A. to support live birth

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Hope 'Born on Christmas'

Hope Natalie Mattina (Natalie means 'born on Christmas') was, as her name suggests, born on Christmas Day in 2004. She weighed 1 lb. 4 oz. and was 12.5 inches long. This is her story, as told in her parents online journal. *In italicized print are the online responses of love and faith from caring family and friends.*



Dec. 29 (It was) Christmas eve at 6 PM. I was to go back and get another blood test in the AM. We went home had a quick dinner and went to the Christmas eve service. I went to bed. Around 1:30 AM I woke up, felt horrible, and began vomiting. We called the midwife, and after checking in with her Dr. consult, (she) told us to come in. By 7 AM the liver enzymes were really high and the platelets falling fast... It was time to transfer to Boston. We went to Tufts New England Medical Center... via ambulance, lights and siren and all. At NEMC they redid all the tests and diagnosed me with HELLPs. The Dr. told us we would deliver our baby (that day) and it would have to be under general anesthesia.

Everything is pretty blurry after that. They delivered the baby at 6:15 PM. I didn't get to see the baby until 24 hours later. Since then my platelet counts continue to rise and I was released today. Our baby is doing well. They estimate she will be able to come home around her due date 3/20/05. ...It was a bittersweet day, as leaving your baby at the hospital is never something you anticipate doing.

I just want you to know that this is the most touching story. I have been following all of the updates. Stay strong.

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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 conception 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.

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL) is composed of lay and clergy members of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

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Presbytery seeks protection of babies

instead of abortion for babies well-developed enough to live outside the womb. Once again in June, the General Assembly will be asked to protect viable babies.

Presbytery sends overture that would protect viable babies

The Redstone Presbytery asks the 217th General Assembly to declare: "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 support 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." Current policy defines viability as "at around 20 weeks" (Minutes, 1992, Part I, pp. 368, para. 27.102). Although it concludes that taking the life of a viable baby is "of grave concern" the policy allows

for so many exceptions that, in the end, its 32 pages still add up to no moral guidance for women and no restrictions on abortion at any time during a pregnancy.

Overture calls for pastoral care and support for adoption

Redstone Presbytery's overture also calls on churches to "provide pastoral and tangible support to women in problem pregnancies and to surround these families

with a community of care." It affirms adoption and asks churches to "assist in seeking loving Christian adoptive families."

The overture, if adopted as written, would supercede and replace all previous statements on late term pregnancies and abortion. The most recent

statement quoted above was passed by the 2003 G.A. and reaffirmed in 2004, as a minority report. It directed that a pastoral letter be sent to all congregations along with four abortion affirming booklets. Most commissioners had not seen the booklets before the minority report passed by a margin of a mere 4 votes.



Baby in womb, 20 weeks, unprotected by current policy

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psa. 139:13-16

Hope 'Born at Christmas'

Dec. 30 We were really blessed today on our visit. We found out Hope was just about to get her breathing tube out. Jill was able to have Hope hold her finger and calm her. It was great to hear her little cry. We also heard the results of her head ultrasound. She had a level one bleed on the right side of her head. It did not damage any tissue and does not give her any increased risk for delays in the future. The Drs. told us that it was the tiniest kind of bleed...and it is not likely that she will have more.



Dec. 31 Today we received a call letting us know that Hope (has) a heart murmur. This is caused by a hole between her heart and lungs. They have begun giving her a medication. There are possible side effects for her kidneys and intestines. Tonight she was doing really well and Jill was able to experience "Kangaroo Care." They place(d) Hope directly on Jill's chest and cover(ed) her with many blankets. Jill was able to hold her for 45 minutes. This was a great moment and wonderful experience to have the baby so close again.

Jan. 2 They did an echocardiogram (today) and found her hole (PDA) had definitely closed and the murmur has stopped. Praise God for His faithfulness. She was looking all around tonight. It was great to see her tiny eyes.

Praise God!!! So little but already so loved by all of us.

Jan. 4 Hope was doing well today... she had her first full sponge bath (and) she had her first feeding today. Sleep well little Hope.

... There are lots of people praying for you, so sleep well, sweet Hope.

Jan. 5 Hope was sleeping when we arrived for our visit and her CPAP had fallen out, but she was breathing fine. The nurse spoke with the Dr. and they decided to try her on a regular tube with just oxygen instead of the CPAP.

What an amazing story! ...What a testimony to the glory of God Hope is.

Jan. 7 Today was a great day! We got the results from her second brain ultrasound and the almost level 1 bleeding was

nonexistent. Praise God! We are VERY grateful to God for watching over Hope and us, providing us with such amazing medical professionals, and putting so many people in our lives to pray, care, and look after us.

There is (another) story—the great generosity and blessing we have received from individuals



in our community, church, all over the country, and probably the world.

Jan. 9 Shortly after we arrived Nurse Barbara got the recliner chair, turned to Chris, and said, "You're holding her today!" Although Chris was a little nervous at first, both Hope and Dad settled in well to the Kangaroo care.

Hope is a true miracle!

Glossary of Terms

HELLP Syndrome - Hemolysis (the breakdown of red blood cells), Elevated Liver enzymes, and Low Platelet count

PDA - Patent Ductus Arteriosus - when a wide muscular blood vessel joining the pulmonary artery to the aorta during fetal development fails to close after birth

CPAP - Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (maintains low pressure in lungs to help baby with breathing difficulties)

ROP - Retinopathy of Prematurity - a disease of the blood vessels that supply blood to the retina

Bradycardia - slowed heart rate

Jan. 11 Hope was having frequent episodes of Apnea and Bradycardia; she stops breathing or drops her respirations very low for a moment and then resumes back to normal again... although it is not good it is not something to panic about.

I have had a child hospitalized in PICU and know that these times make it clear all of our lives are in someone else's hands. I'm praying for strength and grace for each of you.

Jan. 24 Jill arrived today around noon to find Hope no longer had her nasal canula...they felt she didn't need the oxygen. Hope is up to 1 lb. 15 oz., so we will see if she hits 2 lb. soon. Thanks for all your prayers.

Hey, too bad Hope is one ounce shy of 2 pounds on her first month's birthday! Give her some cake and ice cream, guys!:-)

Jan. 30 Today Jill was able to hold her while she had a feeding. She is 36 days old 2 lbs. 3 oz. 21 cm. girth. She had an eye exam tonight after we left and we got a call this evening explaining that the eye doctor saw some potential issues with her vision. He says that there is a 50/50 chance Hope will need laser surgery on her retina in both eyes this week or so. Unfortunately they only perform it at the regional hospitals. Tomorrow Hope will be transferred back to Boston. This news has been pretty difficult for us to take, but we are trying to give it to God, trust Him and the doctors, (and) take it one day at a time. Thanks for your prayers and support.

Hold firmly to the Faith you profess. [Hebrews 4:14b]

Feb. 8 (Laser surgery on Hope's eyes) Today was a long tough day, but we made it through. Jill and Grammy Spear made it to the hospital around 12:30 and were able to see Hope for a while before her surgery (which) began about 1:30 and was done around 3 PM. The doctor reported the surgery went well, but they would not know if it worked for about a week. Please continue to pray that she would recover well and that the procedure would be effective. Thanks for all your prayers.

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Hope "Born at Christmas"

We are all praying for her, we are awaiting the good news that her next eye exam shows that this was a success. We love you.

Feb. 13 Hope is 50 days old today. Praise God! When I take stock, all I can say it that God is amazing. He has continued to carry us each day as we grow along with Hope. We believe that God has put so many people in our lives to provide for us with prayers, thoughts, cards, meals, and just plain love. As Jill and I look forward to tomorrow, we are reminded of the love that God has for all of us, and for the love He has poured out on our family through all the people supporting us. For this we give thanks.

So happy Hope is doing so well! She is a little fighter!

Feb. 22 Jill gave Hope a tubby bath with a little help from the nurses. She cried the whole time and was not excited about her bath.

Yeah! This is great news. March is almost here. Thank heaven for Hope :-)

Feb. 23 Hope is doing well. She is taking all her feeds by bottle or breast and they took her feeding tube out today.

Praise God - He is so good!

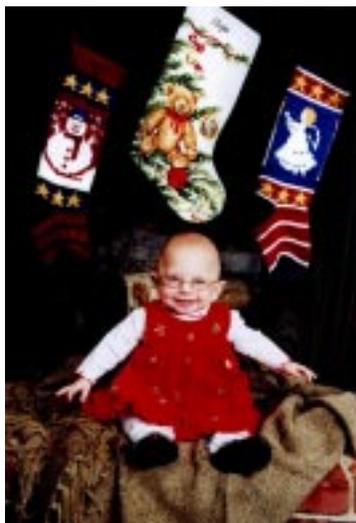
Feb. 28 Today was not a great day for Hope. Her eye exam this morning showed that although her eyes are better they are not yet completely healed and the Dr. feels further laser treatment is needed. The treatment is scheduled for 3:30 PM on Wednesday.

"Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul." (Psa. 143:8)

Mar. 2 (2nd laser surgery) They began the surgery about 4:45 and were done by 5:20. The doctor reported it went well and she will check the eyes again on Monday to see if they are looking better. Hope did much better with the sedation. Jill held her for a while after the surgery. Thanks for all your prayers.

Hope Natalie is truly God's miracle. ...She's overcome so many hurdles so far - she'll keep on doing that, I feel sure!

Mar. 14 Over the past few days Hope has moved into a big girl crib and she seems quite happy with it. She had an upper GI test where she swallows some Barium and they x-ray it to see if they can confirm her reflux and how bad it is. Preliminary reports show she does have reflux, but we have yet to hear the severity and any further treatments. She has had her tube out since Thursday and they are feeding her on demand.



She had an eye exam yesterday and the ROP in her left eye is completely gone, but the right eye is still continuing to heal. We are hopeful... (Hope) is 4 lb. 6 oz.; please

continue to pray for her right eye and her reflux. These are the last two things keeping her from coming home.

She's come so far, a little more can't be too hard for this little one!

Mar. 20 Today is Hope's original due date, so her adjusted age is no longer a gestational week count. She is "a newborn." Chris and Jill were able to spend the night with her in a separate room last night. Chris calls it "pretend parenting." Hope, Mom and Dad fared pretty well. It was great to be able to be with her for so long and be responsible for all her care with only a few steps down the hall nurses and doctors to help if needed. We are so excited but also a little nervous, but we know God will provide all that we need. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and support through this long journey.

Mar. 21 Today is a great day. We get to bring our baby home.

Thank you God so much for the HOPEful prayers that were answered.

For more of Hope's story, pictures, & Hope's video visit: <http://hopenatalie.com/>

Why PPL opposes a "health of the mother" exception for abortion

"Health" as defined in the Supreme Court decision of *Doe v. Bolton* (the companion case to *Roe v. Wade*) includes "all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age—relevant to the well-being of the patient." If "health" is not more narrowly defined, it can be argued that any woman unhappy about being pregnant or concerned about future financial cost to her family would have legal cause for an abortion since it is more expensive to raise a child than to abort one. The current policy allows the church to define "health" using the current legal and broadest definition. It enables them to justify abortion for virtually any reason.

Aside from questions of legal implications of the term "health," does abortion actually safeguard a woman's health as "health" is commonly understood?

After a baby is viable (has a chance to live if born), if a woman's life or health is endangered by continuing the pregnancy, then delivery methods that allow for the possibility of live birth are much safer for the mother than are methods that entail taking the life of (aborting) the baby. With modern medicine this is true without exception. There is never a time after viability that it is safer for the mother to abort the baby.

Contrary to previous medical thought, recent studies have shown that the risks of dying in the 1-8 years after pregnancy are higher following induced abortion than after childbirth. This includes the risks of dying from natural causes as well as the risk of death from suicide, homicide, and from accidents. Risks for hospitalization for psychiatric illness and for alcoholism and drug abuse (controlled for status before pregnancy) are all higher after abortion. Abortion does not safeguard a woman's health.

PPL holds that all efforts should be made to save the lives of both mother and child and recognizes that in rare cases where it may be possible to save only the mother what is necessary to save her life should be done.

Christian Faith and the issues of life: Life issues considered in the context of the Apostles' Creed

— by Gerrit Dawson

"...The Holy Catholic Church, The Communion of Saints..."

Justifying abortion requires certain mental gymnastics. One must think atomistically, as if each person's body were an isolated entity, under no obligation to or dependence on others. Within the island realm of the body, each person is sovereign. There are no ultimate claims from without which we must heed, no ultimate duty to others which can require sacrifice to fulfill. I am I. What happens within my body falls within the realm of my sovereign choices. Hence, abortion can be construed as a choice of a woman about her body, with no binding regard either to the father or the baby. Viewing human beings this way, we come to believe the rhetoric concerning "the right to choose."

The Apostle's Creed enshrines a very different way of looking at what it means to be human. We affirm our belief in the "holy, catholic church." In doing so, we recall the oneness of all believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and remember that the Creed was composed before there were denominations. We profess the "communion of saints," the mystery that Christians are united across the miles, and even across the years. Scripture teaches this reality in many ways. We share in the one Spirit of Jesus (I Cor. 12: 11). We are members of Christ's body, and so of one another (Eph. 5:30). Together we comprise the branches flowing out of Christ the vine (John 15). Those who have gone before us in Christ now form a great cloud of witnesses, cheering us on in our race of faithful service and growth in holiness (Heb. 12: 1). Let's look at three implications of this communion of saints for the topic of abortion.

1. We are not alone and we do not belong to ourselves.

The triune God has his very being in relationship as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has made us in his image, and so we, too, are relational beings.

We come into being because of the profoundly intimate relating of a man and a woman. The image of communion may indeed be distorted by lust, violence, or a failure to love. But the act of union nevertheless speaks to a reality beyond the moment. Two are joined sexually in such a way that a oneness occurs and a new life emerges from that union.

Even the detachment of the plastic instrument in a medical fertilization cannot completely obscure the reality that new human being requires the seed of a man and the egg of a woman. Moreover, an



embryonic human being cannot live without being in relationship to his mother, just as a newborn baby requires constant care in order to grow and thrive.

Even the most independent adults discover upon reflection how profoundly interconnected we all are. From food production to waste removal, from transportation to medical care, from exchange of currency to disaster relief, we live in interdependence.

For Christians, these relationships go even deeper. We share in the Spirit of Christ, and realize this oneness in the communion of prayer, shared worship, and united works of love and mission. We are joined to our ascended Head, deriving our life from his life, our direction from his direction. We know the intimacy of our spirits meeting in unity through our union in Christ. Thus, no decisions occur in a vacuum.

Autonomy is merely a myth for any person, but for the Christian pretensions to autonomy are simply idolatry. We belong to one another. Paul writes directly, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you

were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (I Cor. 6: 19). The communion of saints reminds us profoundly that we are never free to make decisions as if we were independent of others. Abortion is a searing wound upon the body of Christ, and we are all affected by it.

2. This very interrelatedness calls the body of Christ to be intimately, compassionately involved in one another's lives.

Abortion is an act of despair. It arises from the recognition at some level that the sexual act which led to pregnancy should not have occurred. Hence, the giving away of oneself in that union led not to the shelter of love and the fruition of life bringing forth life, but to the wasting of life, an embarrassment of vulnerability and a sense of shame for the consequences.

Abortion means parents have looked at the future with this baby and seen not joyful years ahead, but misery and struggle. Abortion means a woman has not felt the community around her value her, claim her, and promise to love her and the baby for the years to come.

The holy catholic church, by contrast, should offer a shining light of hope. Anyone belonging to our communion should know that such despair is not the only option. Those outside our communion should feel the draw of our love and care for one another to such a degree that they fly to our doors when the weight of consequences is upon them. The communion of saints is a demanding call upon the church of Jesus Christ to love in ways far more radical and sacrificial than ever before. I believe we are called to look after one another so well that a) the instance of

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The Apostles' Creed and abortion

pregnancy outside of marriage is greatly reduced, b) the grace offered means that even children conceived outside of the proper Biblical boundaries (and their parents) are gathered in, claimed for Christ and loved as his own little lambs, and c) parents of children with severe difficulties see the church as the best context for nurturing those children. We are called to love one another out of abortion and into life.

3. The communion of saints means abortion is not final.

We have a word of grace and hope to those who have lost children through abortion. This life is not the end of life. The children of believers are numbered among the company of believers (*Book of Confessions*, 6.141), and we have a strong tradition of believing that children dying in infancy are included in the election of grace (*BOC*, 6.193). We will see one another. The love between parents and children so abruptly, violently aborted will be restored in Christ.

Even this sin Christ has taken to the cross. Even these deaths are included in the victory of resurrection. Near the conclusion of his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes concerning Christians who have died. He describes them as "those who have fallen asleep." The very phrasing speaks of a separation that is temporary. He wants to teach so that they "may not grieve as others do who have no hope." Christians grieve, deeply. But we need not despair. When Christ gathers his own at the last day, the dead will be raised and then the living will be caught up together with them. So, Paul writes, "we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thes. 4: 17).

The communion of saints directs us toward realizing that those Christians who have died are not lost, but are even now in Christ. Our separation from one another is bridged now through our union in Christ through the Spirit. At his return, that separation will disappear completely as we all share in the resurrection of Christ.

Abortion is a stab against the communion of the saints. It is an act of isolation and despair, with long-lasting consequences. The church that professes to be one universal church in a communion that crosses time and space feels the pain of absorbing such wounds. We bear the grief. But we do not despair. Our Lord to whom we are joined has conquered sin and death. So this doctrine calls us to love at a deeper level, to offer our lives in such a way that people are loved out of the despair of choosing abortion. The church alone has the healing balm of forgiveness for the past and a hope for the future. We are called to minister this love as never before.

Gerrit Dawson is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge, LA. His most recent book is Given and Sent in One Love: The True Church of Jesus Christ. He is a PPL board member.

How you can make a difference

Important things you can do right now!

Send an overture to change the denomination's position on abortion.

There is still a little time to get overtures sent to the 2006 General Assembly, but time is short! The deadline for all overtures to be received by the OGA office is May 1, 2006.

The PPL web site has information and sample overtures at www.ppl.org.

Make plans to join the PPL GA team at the 217th General Assembly in Birmingham, Alabama, June 14-22, 2006.

Whatever your gifts, we can find a place for you on our General Assembly team. If God is laying a call on your heart to come join the PPL team, contact the PPL office for more information.

Encourage the groups in your church to become involved in life-affirming ministries.

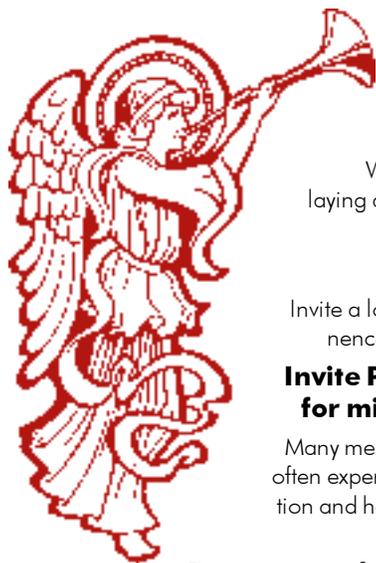
Invite a local Pregnancy Care Center director to speak to your women's group or to give an abstinence talk to your youth group. Plan an event to benefit or support the PCC in some way.

Invite Peggy MacLeod to give a workshop equipping your church leaders for ministry to those affected by abortion. Contact PPL for information.

Many men and women in our churches have been involved in abortion or abortion decisions. They often experience guilt and pain that affects their lives. They desperately need the forgiveness, restoration and healing that only God can give. Learn how you can become equipped to minister to their deepest needs.

Promote a culture of life in your church by teaching PPL's Bible study curriculum or using our Created, Loved & Called DVD series.

The secular worldview of abortion advocacy, population control and a woman's right to reproductive freedom are not Christian views. Churches need to hear truthful teaching on life issues from a biblical viewpoint.



Serious issues will be addressed at the 217th G.A. in Birmingham, June 15-22

32 overtures are currently posted on the OGA website with many more on their way. Churches are still voting on overtures to send to presbyteries and many of the topics are familiar. G.A. will be asked to make decisions that have important consequences for the life of Christ's church.

Beaver-Butler sends overture to "cease funding" for abortion

Just before going to press PPL received news that Beaver-Butler Presbytery has approved an overture from Clinton P.C. of Saxonburg, PA asking the G.A. to "direct its offices and entities immediately to cease funding of any group that supports or advocates either for or against abortion." The overture encourages churches and individuals to voluntarily support those ministries that reflect their convictions. This overture provides for freedom and exercise of conscience on the matter and assures Presbyterians that money given to the church will not be used in violation of their conscience on the issue of abortion.

G.A. will also consider Overture 26, the late-term abortion overture from Redstone Presbytery (p. 1). Overtures are being posted on the OGA web site at: <http://www.pcusa.org/ga217/business/overtures/overtures.htm> as they are received and edited.

The Report of the Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity

Reams have been written in response to the 50 page report known as The PUP Report or just PUP. Declarations, statements, blogs, books, and DVDs address the report. It has been described as schismatic. Some have drawn a "line in the sand" preparing to leave the PC(USA) if the report is adopted.

The theological ground for the report affirms the triune nature of God, Jesus as the way, the truth and the life, and the canonical scripture as the "true Word of God." Ambiguity in the wording of the theological statements, however, allows room for multiple interpretations.

The task force states that their charge was to lead the church in "spiritual discernment of our Christian identity in and for the 21st century." They address four specific issues: Christology, biblical authority and interpretation, ordination, and power. Of the Lordship of Jesus Christ

the task force says, "We were inspired by the power that the affirmation of 'Jesus Is Lord' and other traditional Christological formulas have to shape faith and discipleship in our day." Acknowledging the power a phrase has to shape "faith and discipleship" is quite different from declaring the phrase to be true.

The Task Force has visited nearly every presbytery in an exhaustive marketing tour. They have focused on the process

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www.ird-renew.org

used in their meetings as an alternative to parliamentary decision-making decrying "decision making by up-or-down vote" as ill suited to situations where there is "substantial disagreement." Yet, isn't it just when we hold the most deeply divergent views that we need Robert's Rules to ensure an equal voice for each? Listening to one another until we arrive at consensus sounds great, but in real practice it often means the loudest voice is heard often and fully while others have no opportunity to speak at all.

The recommendations of the report have drawn criticism and would, if adopted, become the active policy of the church. If implemented they would bring significant changes in the Presbyterian process in facing difficult issues. Rec. #5 would allow sessions and presbyteries to decide whether a candidate has departed from the ordination standards and if so, whether those standards are essential.

PUP, if adopted, would change the way Presbyterians decide important issues in our church. It is vital that you read the report for yourself (<http://www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity/resources/fullfinalreport.pdf>) and read at least one of the many responses by renewal groups.

Mississippi Presbytery has already responded to PUP with Overture 30 that

would amend the report. The overture would require ordaining bodies to uphold Book Of Confessions (BOC) and Book Of Order (BOO) standards.

Overtures to remove standards regarding ordination

Overture 02 calls for the deletion of G-6.0106b and declares that all interpretive statements that have been made to date by the UPC(USA) the PCUS and the PC(USA) "concerning ordained service of homosexual church members" would have no further force or effect. About 14 presbyteries have sent concurrences to Overture 2. Overture 39 proposes the amendment of the 1978 UPC(USA) Policy Statement and the 1979 Position Paper of the PCUS on homosexuality. The amendments would delete 7 statements indicating that homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian faith and life.

Overtures that would strengthen existing standards

Overture 43 puts forth an Authoritative Interpretation (A.I.) of G-6.0108 clarifying that BOO standards are not to be determined by sessions or presbyteries.

Overture 18 would add to G-6.0106b a sentence prohibiting further amendments of the paragraph until 2018. Overture 11 "confirms that the requirement for fidelity and/or chastity as set forth in Section G-6.0106b of the BOO plainly prohibits practicing homosexuals, adulterers, or anyone engaged in sexually immoral conduct from being ordained and/or installed to church office." Overture 30 commends a study of the A.I. of 1978 on homosexual ordination.

Overtures calling for ministry in areas of sexual sin

Overture 28 urges the G.A. to "offer pastoral counsel and support" to those struggling with sexual sin. It directs that "materials produced by our national offices reflect both the standard of fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman and chastity in singleness, and God's

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Pro-life news

Supreme Court upholds "right to die"

Oregon is the only state with a "right-to-die" law. On January 18, 2006 the Supreme Court upheld the law. There were three dissenters: Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. The majority opinion left authority to regulate the practice of medicine and the licensing of doctors in the hands of the states. The Oregon law was established in 1994 and is called the Death With Dignity Act. It allows doctors to prescribe a lethal dose of medication if two doctors confirm the patient is a resident of Oregon, "suffers from a terminal disease" that is likely to end his or her life within six months, and is of sound mind. At least 208 people have chosen to end their lives with medication since the law took effect.

(Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Wed., Jan. 18, 2005)

American attitudes support abortion restrictions

In national poll after national poll, Americans support restrictions on abortion and input from parents on a teen's abortion decision. Americans want to see the abortion rate go down and a sizeable number believe that abortion is morally wrong.

For instance, a CBS News poll taken in July and August showed that a whopping 68 percent of those surveyed believed that there were times when abortion should not be legal. Specifically, 33 percent said abortion should be legal only in cases of rape, incest, or to save the woman's life; 15 percent said abortion should be legal only to save the woman's life; 15 percent believed there should be greater restrictions on abortion; and five percent said abortion should never be legal.

Only 28 percent—less than one in three people—said abortion should be legal in all cases. Two separate polls show that 78-80 percent of respondents support state parental notice laws.

(excerpts from *LifeLines*, Winter 2006)

continued from page 7

readiness to forgive and restore every person through Christ."

On the authority of Scripture

Overture 9 would affirm that "Holy Scripture is the Word of God and God's guide to us for worship and life," that it ought to be believed and obeyed, and that its authority is dependent wholly on God. It urges members to "search the Holy Scripture" to discern God's Word for all issues.

Two Overtures on Marriage

Overtures 10 & 27 offer changes to the BOO, W-4.9001. Overture 10 defines marriage as a "covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship." Overture 27 reaffirms that marriage between a man and a woman is "a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family."

This is the Church!

A story of a woman in need and a caring community's response.

*H*er email began, "Hi- I'm 13 weeks pregnant and I am alone. Very alone." Kathy (not her real name) contacted me five days before Christmas in great distress. Already the mother of two young children and unmarried, she had recently learned she was pregnant with a third child. "He wanted me to abort and I wouldn't," she wrote. Her boyfriend left, breaking off their relationship.

"All I do is cry," she said. She chose contact by email because she was afraid she could not talk without breaking into sobs. "I'm so afraid. I'm a Christian but don't really have a church home right now," Kathy admitted. Kathy needed a caring church community. She sought counseling and was worried about providing for the needs of her other two children.

What a joy that PPL could contact a church in her area with a caring pastor! Setting aside his agenda at the busy Christmas season, this concerned pastor made a connection with Kathy that same day by email. He immediately made arrangements to provide free counseling for Kathy and even Christmas gifts for her children. The pastor assured PPL that their church had people and ministries in place that stood ready to do whatever it takes to meet Kathy's needs and provide for the new life growing inside her!

This is the Body of Christ at its best. This is the Church! If only the PC(USA) would catch a vision of what could be done to give women life affirming choices by providing material, emotional and spiritual support. If only, at a governing level, our church was quick to respond with encouragement and concrete resources instead of advocacy for "reproductive rights."

PPL would like to hear from churches who stand ready to make a commitment to walk through crisis pregnancies with women. If you would like more information about becoming a Care Church with Presbyterians Pro-Life, please contact us using the response form on page 11 of this newsletter.

PPL would like to hear your church's story. Has your church provided ministry to a woman in a crisis pregnancy? How have you offered comfort and help to individuals at the end of life? Have you created a culture of life in your church? Do you celebrate Sanctity of Human Life Sunday? If so, would you tell us how? Your experience may inspire other churches to affirm life in new ways.

Photograph courtesy of Life Issues Institute



Baby in womb at 20 wks.

What is taking place in America is a war against the child.

And if we accept that the mother can kill her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?

Mother Teresa, 1997

PC(USA)'s Stand on Capital Punishment While Supporting Abortion is Inconsistent

— *By Ben Sheldon, President Emeritus*

In a recent letter to Presbyweb, the Rev. Dean Waldt commented on Moderator Ufford-Chase's Dec. 11 "Arizona Day" sermon at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Waldt noted that the Moderator had an unprecedented opportunity to preach the Gospel from that prestigious and landmark pulpit, but instead he wasted it by preaching on a purely political issue. Waldt called Ufford-Chase's failure to seize that opportunity, a tragic example of the "Biblical bankruptcy of the PC(USA)." Well it seems to me that our Stated Clerk, Clifton Kirkpatrick, demonstrated the same kind of "Biblical bankruptcy" when he commented on the death of the 1,000th prisoner to be executed in the United States since the Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976.

Kirkpatrick's comments were published in the Presbyterian News Service NEWS of Dec. 2, 2005. He restated the PC(USA)'s long standing opposition to capital punishment, declaring that the "possibility of redemption must be left open for every human being" and that "the only way to properly honor God's gift of life is to refuse to deprive anyone of the life that God has given them."

While PPL has not taken a position supporting or opposing capital punishment, (some note that there is strong Biblical warrant for imposing the death penalty on convicted murderers) Presbyterians Pro-Life does agree that the possibility of redemption and restoration should be left open for everyone, as much as is possible. But PPL also agrees that "the only way to properly honor God's gift of life is to refuse to deprive anyone of the life God has given them" and surely God has given the preborn baby in his/her mother's womb the "gift of life." To deprive that living human, albeit unborn, baby of the gift of his/her life is every bit as wrong as Mr. Kirkpatrick believes imposing the death penalty on a convicted person is.

If the death of 1,000 people through capital punishment is something to be deplored, then is not the death of more

than 40 million babies because of abortion also something to be mourned and grieved for even more? Why our denomination that so vigorously opposes the use of capital

"The only way to properly honor God's gift of life is to refuse to deprive anyone of the life God has given them"

punishment continues to support abortion rights can only be explained by calling it an example of "Biblical bankruptcy." If only our Stated Clerk would speak out as forthrightly against the continued practice of abortion as he does against the use of the death penalty! Indeed, if only our General

Assembly would recognize the sheer inconsistency of its strong opposition to capital punishment while at the same time supporting, and yes, promoting, advocacy for abortion rights! Opposition to capital punishment while at the same time supporting the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice doesn't make sense. We call on Clifton Kirkpatrick to be true to his own words, and work to end the deprivation of unborn babies of their God-given gift of life and thereby show genuine honor to God who is the true giver of all life.

Is it "Biblical bankruptcy" or just plain spiritual blindness? May God open the eyes of those who come to the 217th General Assembly in Birmingham in June so that the PC(USA) will once again be known as a defender of all life, born and unborn, healthy and well, or aged and infirm.

Dear Editor,

Like many people, I am profoundly uneasy with the existence of the death penalty in America. For that reason, it is good to read our Stated Clerk's comments against the death penalty on the occasion of America's 1,000th execution since 1976. It was especially gratifying to read the following sentence he quoted from the 2002 General Assembly statement on restorative justice: "The only way to properly honor God's gift of life is to refuse to deprive anyone of the life that God has given them."

Now, I cannot say with certainty that I oppose all executions: it seems to me that the Bible does allow for the application of capital punishment. However, Kirkpatrick's letter and the sentiments expressed therein must be weighed when considering the morality of the death penalty. That is clear and powerful writing on his part.

If only our denomination, including the Stated Clerk, could muster such clarity of thought and expression regarding the unborn! If it is a sorrowful occasion when we reach 1,000 executions after nearly 30 years, how should we react when we consider that since 1973, there have been more than 40 million abortions performed in this country? The most our denomination seems capable of saying in such circumstances is a vaguely apologetic mumbling about how it's a shame so many abortions happen, but that we must not advocate for changing laws or even stop funding pro-abortion advocacy groups such as the Religious Coalition for Reproductive "Choice."

Our tacit support of abortion on demand is the elephant in our denomination's living room. All of our denomination's high-minded statements against the death penalty are little more than static when we ignore the monstrous evil of mass abortion, or even worse, promote that evil, as in the statements and activities of "our" Washington, DC office.

If we claim that "[t]he only way to properly honor God's gift of life is to refuse to deprive anyone of the life that God has given them," while supporting or condoning abortion on demand, we show ourselves to the world and to God as miserable hypocrites.

To paraphrase from my friend and colleague Bill Pawson, "when will God's people stand up and say 'enough is enough?'"

In Christ (who was once an unborn child),

*Rev. John Esthein
Elderton, PA*

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BEING PRO-LIFE IN A PRO-CHOICE CHURCHIN THE LAST DAYS

— by Pastor Don Elliott

I am in the middle of a verse by verse study of the Book of Revelation at my church on Wednesday nights, and my people think I have tricked them. They thought our study would answer all their questions about the rapture, the millennium, the tribulation, the antichrist, Armageddon and 666. Of course I have handled all those details in eschatology. But I have usually dealt with those sensational particulars by saying, “This could mean this, or this, or this” recognizing that Bible believing Christians have differed on the speculative aspects of the end times.

My people felt they were tricked when I did not spoon feed them with the exact meaning of these things. Yes, I told them what I thought from my vast knowledge and superior spirituality, but I wanted them to do their work in looking at Scripture to see if these things were so.

No, my people really felt tricked, even trapped, when they heard me teach from Revelation making applications for their lives RIGHT NOW. “Wait a minute, I thought Revelation had to do with the future” was their surprised response.

Well, I have been surprised, not tricked, by the impact of Revelation on my Christian life presently. My commitment to Jesus Christ has deepened. My understanding of the church has broadened. My worship has matured. My ministry has urgency. My struggles have perspective. My hope has intensified. All because we are living in the last days and Jesus is coming again.

I have grown to see that my hope for the future changes what I do in the present. Nothing I do now in the name of the coming Lord is futile. It is difficult, depressing, confusing, and sometimes painful; but never futile. And that applies to being pro-life in a pro-choice church.

So what do the last days have to do with being pro-life in a pro-choice church? Well....EVERYTHING. Because we are in the last days.

TODAY is the day of work.

“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.” (John 9:4) Work where God has placed you. Don’t look for a place where there is no work or another kind of work. God’s providence has placed you where you are, so that is where you are to dig in and work. The PC(USA) is not the most pleasant place to minister. It is declining in membership. It is contentious in spirit. It is pluralistic in its beliefs. It cannot consistently stand for innocent life. But it is where God has placed us. The PC(USA) is not our eternal home. It is the church where God has called us. Let us work while we still have time.

TODAY is the day of faithfulness.

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits...Have nothing to do with godless myths...train yourself to be godly... we have put our hope in the living God... command and teach these things... devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching... do not neglect your gift... watch your life and doctrine closely...persevere in them.” (I Tim. 4:1, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16) In the light of false teaching and the last days, the call is to go back to basics. Be faithful in what is most important. There is no need for innovation and novelty. Even though the church has consistently stood for life and only recently in regard to abortion dabbled in “godless myths and old wives’ tales” (I Tim. 4:7); the call is still clear in these last days—be faithful in discipleship. This faithfulness is not practiced in a void. We should not be surprised that strife comes with it. This is not heaven yet. Now is the time to pray

and work for “thy will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We know who the Victor will ultimately be.

TODAY is the day of good news.

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (II Peter 3:8, 9) If there is something we all need right now, it is a lot of mercy and grace. Judgment is not our business. The day of judgment is coming when mercy and grace will cease. But right now the delay in the Lord’s coming is for one reason: the proclaiming of the gospel. As pro-life Presbyterians we must never leave the good news in the battle over life issues. We are not in a political battle. It is a spiritual one and our primary weapon is the good news of Jesus Christ. The door is still open for anyone to repent and return to the Lord. But that door will one day close.

TOMORROW is the eternal day of perspective.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:11–13) It makes everything TODAY worth it. It causes everything TODAY to have meaning. It reveals that TODAY is not all there is.

We are in the last days. The end is near. No message of doom. No reason to run to the mountains. No escapism to another world. It is a call for us who are pro-life in a pro-choice denomination to have hope, not in the way things are, but in the way things shall be.

Even so come, Lord Jesus.

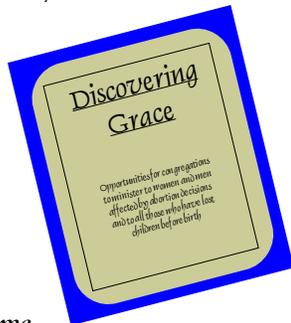
Don Elliott is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Corinth, MS & President of PPL.

Do you know what to say to a post-abortive woman?

Presbyterians Pro-Life would like to introduce you to *Discovering Grace*, a packet of materials designed to help pastors and church members meet the needs of men and women affected by abortion. We are committed to helping individuals and families who, because of an abortion experience, need to find the grace and restoration only available in Jesus Christ.

The packet, which can be requested below, contains:

- a memorial service for preborn children
- a hospital care plan for pregnancy loss
- a list of ministry resources
- a sermon
- workshop information
- testimonies
- a pastor to pastor counseling booklet
- and more



“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not take your holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation

and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me”

—Psalm 51:10-12

Pregnant and need help?

We know churches that care!

PPL is committed to connecting women who are pregnant and in need of help with churches who care and have programs and people in place to meet those needs.

Seventy-five individuals and churches across the United States have indicated to PPL that they want to walk alongside women in crisis pregnancies. Read "This is the Church!" (p.8), an inspiring story of one church that cared.

We want to find a way to meet your needs.

Please contact us:

By phone at 412-487-1990

By email at ppl@ppl.org

Access our web site at www.ppl.org

Write us at 3942 Middle Rd., Allison Park, PA 15101

God has a plan for you and it is a plan for good, not for evil. A plan to give you a future and a hope. (paraphrased Jeremiah 29:10)

We want to bring God's hope to you right now!

PPL News is available on audiotape. This is a resource designed particularly for our readers with limited vision. If you have a friend or relative who is not reading the PPL News because of the ten point type, please make that person aware of this service which is a gift from a faithful Presbyterian pastor in Pennsylvania.

Every Reader Response

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth.” (John 14:16-17)

___ Enclosed: My contribution to support PPL's work \$ _____

___ Our church, named below, wants to be contacted to walk alongside women in crisis pregnancies.

Please send me the following resources:

- ___ A *Pure Hearts! Pure Lives!* packet
- ___ A "God Gives Us Life Through Adoption" packet
- ___ A copy of "Abortion and the Medical Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (USA)"
- ___ PPL's "Life Support" prayer ministry
- ___ A sample packet of PPL materials
- ___ Information on starting a local chapter of PPL
- ___ A catalogue of PPL resources
- ___ A *Sanctity of Human Life Sunday* packet

More resources:

- ___ *“Discovering Grace”*: A resource packet for local ministry (suggested contribution \$9).
- ___ The PPL adult curriculum video series: "Created, Loved, and Called" (suggested contribution \$59/VHS; \$25/DVD)
- ___ A copy of *Not My Own: Abortion and the Marks of the Church*, by Terry Schlossberg and Elizabeth Achtemeier (suggested contribution \$10)
- ___ Videotape of PPL 2004 G.A. event, featuring Frederica Mathewes-Green and Tara Winter (suggested contrib. \$20)

Name		Church and location		
Street Address		City	State	Zip
Daytime phone		Email address		

Please return to PPL, 3942 Middle Rd., Allison Park, PA 15101. PPL is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization of members of the PC(USA).

A financial statement is available from PPL upon written request

The Advent of Hope

—by *Marie Bowen*

What is it that we so love about the Advent Season? Is it the music, the lights, the decorations, or the shopping? Or is it something else, something born inside us—the coming of Hope?

The Advent Season was different for me this year. In July I had a conversation with Terry Schlossberg, former Executive Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life and now Executive Director of Presbyterian Coalition. Advent, Terry says, should be celebrated much earlier in the year. Jesus did not come to earth on Christmas, but he came in the womb of Mary, nine months before the grand announcement to the shepherds of Bethlehem! His birth, trumpeted by angels and written in the heavens to inform magicians in the East, was just the press release announcing a coming that took place when the Holy Spirit overpowered Mary and planted the Christ in her womb.

Hope brings new understanding.

A new understanding was born in my heart when I heard Terry's words. Several truths took up residence in my being all at once upon hearing it. God *really* loves me. He *planned this redemption* of mankind. God chose to identify with mankind as a embryo, in the womb, before his birth. He did not arrive as a baby in a manger; he came as a baby in the womb!

Hope is what I love about Advent. I'm not talking about a wishful longing as for a special gift. When I was twelve I "hoped" for ice skates for Christmas, but the hope of

advent is reality, evidence, a knowing. This hope is a confidence that the truth we already know in our hearts will soon be revealed. The Word will be made flesh!

Hope can seem tenuous, fragile.

Hope can be a very slippery thing, hard to hold. Vivid in my memory is the

"God chose to identify with mankind as a embryo, in the womb, before his birth. He did not arrive as a baby in a manger; he came as a baby in the womb!"

moment in 1992 when the document "Problem Pregnancies and Abortion" was approved in a plenary session of G.A. in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A minority report offering a faithful pro-life statement was defeated. I remember the tears in the eyes of the pastor next to me and my own. I remember the silence of grief as the PPL G.A. team returned to our hospitality suite. Without prearranged appointment we gathered as though called for prayer. And I remember God in that moment birthing hope as individuals quoted scripture, led hymns of the faith and were comforted together by the Holy Spirit.



Hope perseveres.

Hope can be vigorously stubborn. It rises within us even in moments of deep despair.

Conflict can be very discouraging. It is not at all pleasant to live in a family, a community, a church, or a denomination that is infected with disagreement! Our convictions about the wrongness of abortion, the value of human life and its ownership by God, and our standards for purity in sexual and family relationships—these are beliefs that flow out of the essence of our faith. They are produced by the workings of Christ in us.

The brokenness of our unity deeply grieves us. Frequently we think about giving up or leaving the church, but hope impels us to implore again that our church take a faithful stand on issues of human life. Our hope is not to batter our opponents, but to speak truth that will restore purity and unity to the body.

Hope is a gift from above.

Hope is born in us by the Spirit of God. Its source is not the human spirit. It is Christ come to live in us, grow in us, hope in us. He has a plan for the unity, peace and purity of the church. It is already here. Let's celebrate Advent!

Presbyterians Pro-Life

Research, Education, and Care, Inc.
3942 Middle Road
Allison Park, PA 15101

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