

Presbyterians Pro-Life Monthly

RESEARCH, EDUCATION & CARE, INC.

November 2011

Presbytery asks GA to protect Presbyterians “from the sin of complicity in the taking of human life...”

After a 9 month process, on November 8, 2011, The Washington Presbytery approved 43-9 an overture to the 220th GA directing the Board of Pensions to provide a medical benefits plan which will not pay for abortions except to save the physical life of the mother.

The overture will be considered by commissioners to the General Assembly in Pittsburgh, PA (June 30-July 7, 2012) and seeks “to protect Presbyterians who believe abortion is sin, from the sin of complicity in the taking of human life.” If approved by the GA, the Board of Pensions would be directed to make changes in the Medical Benefits Plan which currently covers all abortion claims. The mandatory nature of the Medical Benefits Plan (required for all installed pastors in the PC(USA)) and its unrestricted coverage of abortion has long been an issue of conscience for those who believe abortion is sin. The Presbytery asks the GA to direct the Board of Pensions “to provide a medical benefits plan which will not pay for abortions, except that any procedure necessary to save the physical life of the woman will be covered.”

The overture was initiated by the Langeloth Presbyterian Church and reminds PC(USA) members in its rationale that, “The Board of Pensions medical plan currently covers abortion under a wide range of circumstances.” In fact, the BOP Plan covers *all* claims for legal abortion without regard to policy statements of the denomination. The 1992 policy document, *Problem Pregnancies and Abortion*, for example, speaks against

Text of the Washington Presbytery Overture

Resolved, that the Presbytery of Washington overtures the 220th General Assembly (2012) to protect Presbyterians who believe abortion is sin, from the sin of complicity in the taking of human life by directing the Board of Pensions to provide a medical benefits plan which will not pay for abortions, except that any procedure necessary to save the physical life of the woman will be covered.

abortions for reasons of convenience, gender selection, or to acquire fetal tissue for research purposes. A General Assembly statement in 2006 also declared that viable babies ought not be aborted. However, The Board of Pensions makes no effort to distinguish whether claims for abor-

tion adhere to these guidelines expressed in PCUSA policy.

The rationale of the overture says that abortions, other than “medical emergencies when the life of the mother is at stake,” “fly in the face of the Scriptures, which show a clear and consis-

tent regard for human life at even its earliest stages.” Quoting Ephesians 1:4-6, Psalm 139:13, and Luke 1:41, the rationale reminds us that we are created and chosen by God and that our lives are precious to Him. The overture rationale concludes: “Let us not treat lightly lives that are costly and precious to our Lord, but instead adopt a medical plan that shows compassion for both mother and child, in full obedience to God’s revealed will.”

For a copy of the overture and information on how to concur contact the PPL office.



Di Lupton, PPL Board member, set up a PPL display table (pictured above and at the right) at a recent Missouri Union Presbytery meeting. Di, who also manages PPL’s Booth at General Assemblies and Presbyterian Women Gatherings, has learned that pro-life displays often prompt opportunities for ministry to men and women who have experienced abortions.

PPL table displays open doors to Witness & Ministry

A few months ago, the Alamo Area Presbyterians Pro-Life (AAPPL) made their debut appearance at a Mission Presbytery meeting. Only 3 individuals approached the display. Chapter leaders did not give up, they tried again and this time they baked chocolate chip cookies and attached ‘Precious Feet’ pins. People flocked to the AAPPL exhibit! They gave out 25 of PPL’s booklets on “Abortion and the Medical Benefits Plan of the PC(USA).” Chapter President, Dr. Martha Leatherman, described the response:

“Our ‘Precious Feet’ pins are ‘walking away.’ Better yet, they are visible on the lapels of the Commissioners. Even more, people have stopped by our table and said, ‘I am so glad you are here.’ People are interested in finding out how their contributions to the Medical Benefits Plan are being used, and they are shocked to find out their money has paid for abortions. Some are horrified to find out that the PC(USA) is ‘pro-choice.’”



Focus on Ministry . . .

YoungLIVES helps Teen Moms

Is your church looking for a way to support teen moms and their babies, but you don't know how to begin? You might want to plug into YoungLives. A ministry of Young Life, it extends compassion to teen moms, offering support and hope, through clubs, camps, and mentoring.

Volunteers mentor moms to Christ

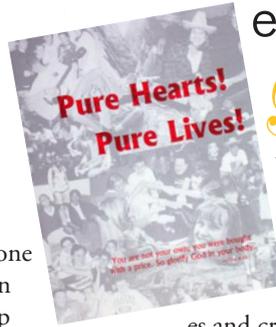
The heart of YoungLives ministry is the building of one-on-one mentoring relationships between adult Christian women and teen moms. The mentors offer unconditional love and friendship, help in finding the practical resources teen moms need for their children, and assistance in planning for their future. In all of this the mentors hope to forge a bridge that paves the way for mentors to share the message of Jesus Christ.

Camps & clubs foster friendships & spiritual growth

Through club and camp activities teen moms have an opportunity to build friendships and understand that they are not alone. They find time to relax, play, and learn about God and His plan for their lives.

To learn how your church can build a partnership with YoungLives visit their website (<http://www.younglife.org/YoungLives/>) or contact your local Young Life coordinator.

Steps your church can take to encourage sexual purity



Provide positive models of marriage and commitment to families in your congregation. Provide opportunities for couples to testify to the blessing of marriage and family.

Give tangible support and encouragement to parents in communicating biblical standards of sexuality to their children. Develop good resources and create a supportive ethos in your congregation. The culture bombards our youth with the enticement of sex. The church needs to support families with a countercultural message.

Include positive and regular affirmation of biblical standards of sexuality in the preaching and teaching of your church. Don't imply that sexuality is not suitable or relevant subject matter for the church.

Teach our children the biblical standards of sexuality and include opportunities for them to make decisions of sexual purity. Be sure to provide opportunities for forgiveness, restoration, and a new start where that is necessary.

PPL has a program called *Pure Hearts! Pure Lives!* with curriculum suggestions for all age groups, along with a format for decision making. Contact us to receive your copy!

. . . Focus on Witness

PPL Donors, this note is for YOU!

Dear Presbyterians Pro Life,
I just want to say that I have a tremendous amount of respect for the work your organization has done to preserve the lives of unborn children. Your "Life: A Biblical Perspective" page was paramount in helping my youngest sister understand the importance of keeping her child and for that I am very grateful. You have touched our family in a way that will affect us for the rest of our lives.

Thank you,
Beth Cutolo

The power of an overture to the G. A.

The PC(USA) General Assembly (G.A.) is the highest governing body in the PC(USA). The G.A. meets every two years to conduct the business of the denomination. Each session has the opportunity to bring reform to the denomination by initiating overtures which, if approved by the presbytery, become items of business at the annual meeting of the G.A.

A G.A. statement of opposition to late-term abortion (2006) was the result of an overture initiated by a church's session. PPL encourages use of the overture process and we have resources to aid sessions in use of the process. We can help you navigate the official rules of the G.A. and offer suggestions for subject matter, and background material to help support overtures. PPL has had a team of Presbyterians at each G. A. since well before reunion in 1983; we are prepared to walk with you through the G. A. process.

Events in the society suggest that timely overtures on life issues have potential to halt the Board of Pensions' coverage of abortions through the Medical Benefits Plan, could move congregations toward more pastoral care at the beginning and end of life, and could bring about reconsideration of the General Assembly's 1992 policy condoning unrestricted abortion. It is time for the PC(USA) to affirm that a human life begins at fertilization and is precious to God from that moment until natural death. Will you work with us to bring an overture to the 220th General Assembly?

If God is calling your congregation to initiate reform by bringing an overture, you need to act soon. Overtures requiring a change in the constitution must arrive at the Office of the G. A. by March 2, 2012. Overtures with financial implications, must arrive at OGA by May 1, and all others by May 16, 2012.

Contact PPL for more information. Our office phone is 412-487-1990 or email us at ppl@ppl.org.