

National Pro-Life Religious Council, Inc. PO

Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306

Uniting For Life

Summer 2007

How Can We Help Christian Pastors Strengthen Pro-Life Ministry?

NPRC Workshop Provides Experienced Wisdom

At the 2007 National Right to Life Convention, eight NPRC leaders answered some central questions about pro-life ministry during the annual NPRC workshop, "We are the Sheep, Where are the Shepherds."

In responding to the first question, "What should we say to pastors afraid of offending women who have had abortions?" Vera Faith Lord of Alpha Omega Life pointed out that these women are already hurting and that it is the pastor's duty to minister to them. The first approach, she said, should be to have an experienced post-abortive woman speak to the congregation. This is a woman's health issue, and can open up a counseling ministry that will encourage women formerly afraid to approach the pastor to seek such counseling.

Another question often raised, "What if pastor sees prolifers as fanatical or 'single issue'?" was addressed by Rev. Kirk van der Swaagh of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, who encouraged pro-life workers to let their pastor know that they appreciate the breadth of responsibilities with which he has to deal. Then let him know you are there to help him and ask him how you can serve, he suggested. This may take some self-examination about your own attitudes.

What if the pastors says: "The pastor's job is to bring Christ to the congregation, but not to be involved in social issues." Rev. John Brown of United Friends for Life suggested asking what Christ said and did about social issues. Several gospel passages can show how Christ's ministry involved social issues and standing up for what is true. "To obey Jesus is to be involved with people, to care about them," Rev. Brown said. This necessarily includes pro-life concerns.

A regular question asked is, "What if my pastor fears losing the church's tax status?" Ernest Ohlhoff, Director of the NRLC Religious Outreach Department, emphasized the right of free speech and freedom to practice religion that is contained in the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The IRS cannot stop a pastor from speaking on the issue of abortion. It is only some "political correctness" people who keep telling pastors to be "cautious" and make them fearful of getting in trouble. But the only thing pastors have to be careful about is promoting a politician or one political party. As long as the pastor focuses on the issue as a spiritual and moral problem, he has no restriction on his speech, Ohlhoff clarified.

Georgette Fornay of Anglicans for Life spoke on the question: "How can post-abortive women help the pastor?" "Start with prayer!" she urged. Then be sure you know the facts so you can explain the problem, e.g. that 70% of post-abortion women claim a church membership, and that 43% of women under age 45 will have had an abortion. She also said to keep in mind that men are also affected, and often couples are dealing with this in their marriage. Action items included making brochures available at the church, providing telephone numbers of crisis pregnancy centers and post-abortion ministries, and providing a sermon on repentance that can mention various sexual sins including abortion. She mentioned that the Silent No More Campaign provides a DVD and a web site that contain 15 testimonies of post-abortive women, as well as guidelines about how to give a testimony. Sanctity of Life Sunday in January is a good time to share such a testimony.

Rev. Clenard Childress of LEARN helped attendees consider "How can we motivate Black pastors to address abortion?" He suggested seeking a pastor with whom you share strong Gospel values, then helping him understand the abortion situation among black women and how post-abortion problems affect his church, approaching it as a civil rights or a moral issue, but avoiding

Some have found pastors who say, "Abortions don't happen in my church. People know it's wrong." Marie Bowen of Presbyterians Pro-Life responded that women who believe abortion is wrong still have abortions. This is a problem in every church. Counseling and practical options need to be made available for each congregation.

Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director of Priests for Life, spoke to the question, "What things should we ask the pastor to do?" Begin with a daily prayer on abortion, he said. Bring an end to this killing among believers by announcing alternatives to abortion, with hotline telephone numbers permanently in the church bulletin. Offer healing, Organize prayer at a local abortion clinic, "We don't need a lot of people. We need people willing to take a lot of risk."

NPRC Awards Archbishop Burke

During the Prayer Breakfast at NRLC convention in June, NPRC presented the National Pro-Life Recognition Award to Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis, MO, in order to demonstrate the esteem pro-life leaders in many different denominations have for Archbishop Burke's courageous actions in defense of the sanctity of life. He has called upon Catholic legislators to uphold the inviolibility of human life from conception, fought against embryo-killing

research provisions in Missouri, and protested the honoring of an abortion activist singer at a Catholic event.

"What I am doing is what a shepherd should be doing: calling the flock to respect the law written in our human hearts...to protect human life." the Archbishop responded...





Uniting For Life

A Christian Pro-Life Newsletter

Simmer 2007

National Pro-Life Religious Council, PO Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306 website: www.nprcouncil.org e-mail: mail@nprcouncil.org

National Pro-Life **Religious Council**

The National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC) is a Christian coalition which acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and works to encourage every Christian denomination to affirm and witness to the biblical standard of the value, dignity and sanctity of human life, and to foster ministry to those vulnerable to the violence of abortion or euthanasia.

Member Organizations

Alpha Omega Life

Black Americans for Life

Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC)

International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC for Life)

Life Education and Resource Network (LEARN)

Lutherans for Life (LFL)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life

National Clergy Council (NCC)

NOEL for Life

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Priests for Life (PFL)

Religious Outreach. National Right to Life Committee

Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)

United Friends for Life (UFL)

Harold O.J. Brown: In Memoriam

By Dennis DiMauro,

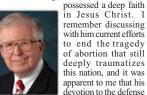
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

On Sunday, July 8th, the pro-life movement lost one of its most devoted activists when Harold O.J. Brown was called home to be with the Lord. Shortly after Roe v. Wade, Brown was one of the great intellectual voices who energized the originally complacent Protestant churches into action in defense of the unborn. Brown's groundbreaking book, Death Before Birth, stressed the fact that Christians could not stand idly by and allow abortion-on-demand to become an accepted way of life in the United States. In the book, he pointed out that Christians would share the moral responsibility for the scourge of abortion unless they spoke out through the political system to enact change.

Everett Koop, founded the Christian Action Council to create an evangelical group which would work to save the lives of unborn children. This organization became known as CareNet in 1993. and is now devoted to creating and supporting pregnancy centers around the country. In fact, CareNet supports over 1,090 pregnancy centers nationwide, and saves countless lives every year. Dr. Brown has also worked on the editorial staff of the Human Life Review, and wrote numerous articles on the sanctity of life in Christianity Today and many other publications. He has also trained thousands of men and women for Christian ministry in his professorships

at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, and Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC.

I had the privilege of having Dr. Brown as my thesis advisor at Reformed Theological Seminary, and he was one of my true heroes in the faith. Dr. Brown was a towering intellect and a man who



In 1975, Brown, along with C. Dr. Harold O.J. Brown of the unborn was paramount. He was

also a man of true independent conviction and courage, attributes that are not often seen in today's public discourse. Indeed, Dr. Brown was not a political person, nor did he adhere to a political "party line." Rather, he was a man motivated to living out God's plan for human life, and he expected our national leaders to speak out in defense of the unborn as well. Indeed, it is rare to find a person who possesses a love for God, a mind for God, and who also has the mettle to truly work for the Kingdom of God. I knew such a person in Dr. Harold O. J.

National Pro-Life Religious Council Offers Pro-Life Devotional

A booklet of 30 days worth of Scriptures, meditations and prayers on pro-life themes has been compiled and created by members of the National Pro-Life Religious Council.

To order copies of this devotional, contact: National Pro-Life Religious Council, Orders Department PO Box 61838 Staten Island, NY 10306 mail@NPRCouncil.org

Archbishop Naumann Calls for Courage and Brains in Pro-Life Action

At the Prayer Breakfast June 15 during National Right to Life's Annual Convention, Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, KS used characters from *The Wizard of Oz* to challenge attendees in their pro-life activity.

Like the Scarecrow, "we need to pray for not only a brain, but for the wisdom to know how to best communicate to our contemporaries the sanctity of human life," Archbishop Naumann related. He pointed out that a pro-lifer "not prudent in the manner of presentation, can actually drive people away from the truth."

Courage like the Lion's is also a must: "Where human life is at risk, we cannot afford to be timid," the Archbishop insisted

We should also, like the Tin Man, desire a heart "that will move us to seek to rescue with love those we are unable to protect with the law," he further noted, explaining the need for post-abortion ministry to reach out "with compassion to those who have chosen abortion and now deeply regret their choice....

"Like Dorothy we must ask the Lord to give us the wisdom, courage and love to bring our nation home...to the values needed to restore family life and respect for human life." He called on the participants to "build a civilization of love and a culture of life where every child is treasured as a unique image of his or her Creator."

Archbishop Naumann criticized the position of Catholics who used the rhetoric of "choice" which "obfuscates the human tragedy that is a consequence of every abortion—the destruction of an innocent and defenseless human life." He said that such a position that "championed a self-contradictory position of personal opposition but public support for abortion," was similar to that of Stephen Douglas in his debate with Abraham Lincoln on slavery, saying that he was "not favoring slavery but of the right of people...to choose to sanction slavery."

At the same time, the Kansas City Archbishop pointed out, there are hopeful signs such as the Supreme Court decision to uphold a ban on partial-birth abortions, a decrease in the number of abortions, and polling

results showing a shift of opinion in the pro-life direction.



Archbishop stated.

Archbishop Naumann

Bella: a Movie to See

By Georgette Fornay, Anglicans for Life

While Hollywood typically promotes an amoral worldview, hope is on the horizon as a younger generation is beginning to break out of the stereotypical trends.

Three young Mexican men — producer, director, and lead actor, who are conservative Catholics— have produced a movie called *Bella*. This wonderful movie seeks to make a positive difference by telling the story of a man who loses it all and ultimately finds what truly matters. Family, life, relationships and our capacity to love. *Bella* even won the coveted Toronto Film Festival's People Choice Award!

I had the unique opportunity to attend the premiere of this movie in Mexico City in March 2006. The movie had a huge impact on me, leaving me speechless and in tears. *Bella* is scheduled to be in movie theatres in September and I strongly recommend you see it. To learn more about this movie, please visit www.BellatheMovie.com.

Jordin Sparks, this year's American Idol winner, is also not your runof the-mill Hollywood fame seeker. Jordin Sparks is a long-time pro-life advocate! She has repeatedly participated in pro-life conferences as a volunteer and sang at Arizona's Right to Life 2005 conference. Sparks hasn't been shy about her pro-life beliefs. She appeared on Fox & Friends

with Brian Kilmeade who asked her questions based on e-mails from viewers. Sparks was asked about a ring she wears on her wedding ring finger even though she is 17 years old and unmarried. She said, without hesitation, that it was her Purity Ring, and that it says she is waiting until she is married, and saving herself for true love. There is a photo that appeared on Sparks' personal

appeared on Sparks' personal Myspace page with her holding a sign from National Right to Life saying Stop Abortion Now.



photo courtesy of www.BellatheMovie.com

Associate Membership Application Yes, I would like to become an Associate Member

of the National Pro-Life Religious Council, Inc.
Enclosed is my fee of \$25.00 for membership as:
___an individual __a church __a group
I would like to make a tax deductible donation of
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Mail to: NPRC c/o Development Office, PO Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306-9813

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Relief of Conscience in the Presbyterian Church (USA)

By Laureen Bodnar, Presbyterians Pro-Life

Sometimes the Lord's work requires us to take great leaps of faith, but sometimes it just requires baby steps. Are we as Christians willing to explore and take those steps? Even just little ones?

Northminister Presbyterian Church recently took one baby step that required nothing but discerning God's word prayerfully, a session vote, and a letter directed to the Board of Pensions through the Pittsburgh Presbytery. What was this baby step? It was a request for Northminister to be granted "Relief of Conscience." You may not be aware that the Presbyterian Church (USA) Board of Pensions mandatory Medical Benefits Plan for ordained pastors and their families, pays for abortion procedures at any time during the pregnancy for any reason. This coverage includes partial-birth abortion and the RU-486 abortion pill for reasons like unwanted pregnancies, gender selection, and selective reduction. The portion of our tithes and offerings included in the Pastor's terms of call is used to pay dues to the PC (USA) Board of Pensions for pension, death and disability, and medical claims for those ordained in ministry.

In 1998, the BOP instituted a "Relief of Conscience" program for those congregations who oppose having their tithes and offerings used to pay for abortion claims. The program prevents dues paid by participating "ROC" churches to the medical portion of the plan from being used for abortions. Instead, a dollar amount equal to the cost of abortion claims from the previous year is deposited in an Adoption Fund. When enough Adoption funds are available, grants are given to pastors' families to assist with the uninsured medical costs relating to adoption. Northminster's Session voted unanimously on May 29, 2007 in favor of requesting "Relief of Conscience." The request was approved by the Presbytery, June 7, 2007.

Abortions will continue to be covered, regardless of the reason, by the PC (USA) Board of Pensions until hearts change. Our "Relief

of Conscience" effort seems futile in the grander scheme of things. So, why do we even bother making this request? Baby steps! Northminster is one small church in one huge Presbytery making a statement that we value the human life God created from conception until death. What if ten churches requested and were granted "Relief of Conscience"? What if twenty or thirty or one hundred churches joined forces and made the same statement as Northminster?

Relief of Conscience is a program that most Presbyteries across the country will not promote. However, more churches are hearing about it and more and more ROC requests are being made; hopefully, baby's lives are being spared.

I've asked myself, "How could this decision for Relief of Conscience possibly influence our denomination or make any difference?" Proverbs 14:12 says "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death." Abortion is not right and man's way leads to death of innocent lives. Our Session could not ignore that fact. The statement needs to be made

whether or not anyone hears it. What a relief! A baby step? Maybe...but in my heart, it's another giant leap!

[Laureen is PPL's Associate Director and an elder at Northminster Presbyterian Church. She is active in music ministry and chairs the missions committee. Laureen is a volunteer counselor at a local Pregnancy Care Center. She is married, and the mother of two sons.]



Laureen Bodnar

United Methodist Church Challenged to End Support for Abortion

By John Lomperis, Institute on Religion and Democracy, for LifeNews

At their annual meetings in June, the North Carolina and Mississippi Conferences of the United Methodist Church called on the denomination to limit its support for legal abortion to cases of danger to the mother's physical life. This would align America's second-largest Protestant denomination with the stance of the National Right to Life Committee and other major pro-life

Last month, the North Carolina and Mississippi Conferences, along with the regional bodies representing United Methodists in eastern Tennessee, South Indiana, and Northwest Texas also passed resolutions calling on the denomination to withdraw its membership in the radically pro-abortion Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). The latter set of resolutions noted such concerns as RCRC's unconditional support for all abortions, the fact that RCRC does not represent the views of grassroots United Methodists, and RCRC's opposition to the United Methodist Church's more conservative positions on partial-birth abortion and homosexual practice. RCRC was established in 1973 with support from the nonprofit foundation of the pornographic magazine, Playboy, among others in 1973 to counter the nascent movement to overturn Roe v. Wade. Then, as now, RCRC (then called the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights) aimed to undermine the largely religiously motivated pro-life movement by

propping up radical, pro-abortion Jewish, mainline Protestant, and Unitarian clergy.

The 2003 expose, Holy Abortion? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, revealed that the coalition recently received three-fourths of its income from liberal foundations and less than one percent from its member denominations and other religious bodies. The United Methodist Church, which provides no direct financial support, accounts for 8 million of the 20 million Americans who RCRC claims to represent. These resolutions will make abortion a major issue addressed at the 2008 United Methodist General Conference. General Conferences meet every four years and are the denomination's top authority for determining the church's theological, moral, and structural positions.

It is not unprecedented for a denomination to reverse past support for abortion....In the 1970s and 1980s, Southern Baptist denominational officials worked closely with groups like RCRC and People for the American Way to oppose abortion restrictions. Since then, however, the Southern Baptist Convention has adopted a solidly pro-life position and become a key bulwark of the pro-life movement. A similar shift may be under way in the United Methodist Church's response to abortion.