

centuries of history upside down: they want the Church to support death. A review of their literature finds that they disregard large portions of Scripture that point to the sacredness of life while distorting other verses to displace God's authority as creator to women being the creator. For example, in the RCRC's publication *Prayerfully Pro-Choice* on page 117 it states, "Because the pregnancy is hers, the decision to continue the pregnancy is uniquely hers. Like the Creator, she reflects upon what is good for the creation of which she is agent." Clearly the RCRC's response in word to Scripture is misguided but what about its actions?

Here are three examples of the RCRC's activities for life:

1. The RCRC opposes legislation designed to protect women. This includes Parental Consent laws that require a parent's approval before their minor-aged daughter can have an abortion and Informed Consent laws that provide women with information about the physical and emotional consequences of abortion. They are also working against laws being introduced in various states that establish health care regulations at abortion clinics.
2. The RCRC refers women facing unplanned pregnancies and those who have experienced abortion that are seeking reconciliation and forgiveness from Jesus Christ to secular counseling resources such as Planned Parenthood, ignoring the 4,000 Christian pregnancy resource centers.
3. The RCRC supports Partial-Birth Abortion (PBA). The following is a PBA procedure as described by a nurse at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing: "Dr. Haskell went in with forceps and grabbed the baby's legs and pulled them down into the birth canal. Then he delivered the baby's body and the arms – everything but the head. The doctor kept the head right inside the uterus... The baby's

little fingers were clasping and unclasping, and his little feet were kicking. Then the doctor stuck the scissors in the back of his head and the baby's arms jerked out, like a startle reaction, like a flinch, like a baby does when he thinks he is going to fall. The doctor opened up the scissors, stuck a high-powered suction tube into the opening, and sucked the baby's brains out. Now the baby went completely limp... He cut the umbilical cord and delivered the placenta. He threw the baby in a pan, along with the placenta and the instruments he had just used." This description is also included in the recent Supreme Court opinion that upheld the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act, a law signed by President Bush in 2003. The Coalition filed an *amici curia* brief urging the Supreme Court to strike down the law.

In reflecting upon our Church's historical position in support of life, we see that membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is clearly an anomaly. Endorsement of such an organization by a church that claims to be Christian reflects ignorance and/or arrogance. The RCRC's support for the death and destruction of life, especially innocent unborn babies, is terrible beyond words but the Episcopal Church's support and membership in the Coalition reveals a blatant disregard for God, His Son, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, reason, and tradition.

CONCLUSION

Those who call Jesus their Lord and Savior cannot adopt the disposable life ethic promoted in society and many of churches today. Quality of life, stage of development, condition of life, economics, and productivity cannot be the baseline on which we judge the value of a life. God is the only one who can number a man's days.

God wants His people and His Church by extension to celebrate, protect, and honor life. Doing these things gives us the opportunity to glorify Him and thank

Him for creating and redeeming us and all whom He has made. We owe our existence and redemption to God. He sustains us; we don't sustain Him.

It is incumbent upon the leaders of our great Church to reclaim our heritage of life and renew their commitment to life, urging their flock to do the same. It is time for the Anglican Church to publicly proclaim itself as a "pro" life body of believers.

We must affirm life through advocacy, education and ministry. We must encourage and challenge one another to value life and seek to uphold the heritage of caring for life as a unified group. Obeying His Word of Life will unleash His power in a way this generation of believers has never experienced.

I have written all this because of an urgency I feel. It is time for Christians everywhere to exert the power and love of God in defending the sanctity of life. International promoters of death are working overtime to secure the legalized killing of humans, both born and unborn worldwide. With the truth of Scripture to empower and the sacrificial example of Christ to inspire, God's people must embrace His mandate to affirm all human life. No exceptions, no excuses.

If after reading this you agree that life is important, I encourage you to do three things:

1. Repent for the years you ignored God's word on life and any role you have had in taking a life or promoting death.
2. Reaffirm your baptismal covenant with God.
Celebrant: *Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?*
People: *I will with God's help.*
3. Join Anglicans for Life's global ministry affirming the sanctity of life.

WHY LIFE IS IMPORTANT

by Georgette Forney, President, Anglicans for Life
August 2007

Each day every human being makes a variety of decisions: What shall I eat? What shall I wear? Some decisions are critical; others are not. Deciding what to eat each day is a typical part of every human's daily experience. Deciding whether we believe in God and want to walk as a Christian is another choice each person makes. Once someone becomes a Christian and accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, he will still make many choices. Do I buy a Ford or a Chevy? Do I order vanilla or chocolate ice cream? However what we don't get to decide is what is morally right and wrong.

As believers, we have Scripture as our authority. It starts with the basic facts: God is the Creator of everything. Scripture defines His laws. It explains His covenant with His people. It communicates His love and promises. It is also explicit in describing His judgment. The Bible is our relationship manual with the Triune God.

Therefore if we call ourselves Christians and conduct our lives as His Church, we must adhere to His Word. We don't get to choose what parts of Scripture we like and want to obey. The point of being a Christian is to walk by faith in His Word. Human logic is no longer our god. For Christians, every idea, concept, and theory must be brought captive to Him and screened by Scripture. Oswald Chambers says it best, "To become one with Jesus Christ, a person must be willing not only to give up sin but also to surrender his whole way of looking at things."

In believing that all Scripture is inspired by God and designed to teach Christians how to live, we know that our worldview is based on the entire Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, God teaches us everything we need to know so that every man and woman of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16)

SCRIPTURE'S PERSPECTIVE

The most common theme revealed in an in-depth study of Scriptures is the sanctity of life (see AnglicansforLife.org website for a full list of references). The Bible tells us that human life has value because we are created by God. Males and females are made in God's

image (Gen 1:27) "a little lower than heavenly beings, crowned with glory and honor" according to Psalm 8:5. In Jesus' death on the cross, God shows his love for human life in sacrificing His Son to redeem us. Finally, in our Lord's resurrection and victory over death, God declares the sacredness of human life by availing to us eternal life with Him through Jesus. (1 John 5:11-12)

- The Bible is the Word of Life from beginning to end. It declares the sanctity of life in its description of God's sovereignty. Deuteronomy 32:39 *See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.*
- It declares the sanctity of life in its discussion of the incarnation. John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
- It declares the sanctity of life in its explanation of Christ's redemption. 2 Timothy 1:10 *but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*
- It declares the sanctity of life in its exposition of ethical justice. Genesis 9:6 *Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.*
- It declares the sanctity of life in its exhortation to covenantal mercy. James 1:27 *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

The "pro" life message of the bible is clear.

Defending the sanctity of life is not one issue among many for Christians to consider getting involved in. Upholding the sanctity of life is a mandate in Scripture. The Bible directs God's people and His Church to protect life, care for one another, and make disciples. A person's commitment to the ethic of life

is related to his or her commitment to the Word of Life given to them by the Lord of Life. It should be part of each believer's worldview.

Instead, the Church and God's people have placed life **low** on the priority list of Christian concerns. One reason for this may be because the abortion debate has overshadowed the sanctity of life. Life is now tied directly to the question of whether abortion should be legal or illegal and is typically portrayed as a political and legal issue. Thirty-four years of arguments about abortion has caused the majority of people (both Christian and non-Christian) to turn a deaf ear to any discussion that uses the words "sanctity of life" or "abortion."

This apathy is frustrating to those of us who see the value of life and the destruction of it caused by abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia in our culture today. How can people ignore the killing of God's precious creation? There are five great reasons why believers should incorporate life-affirming activities into their devotional life.

First and foremost, we should get involved in protecting life because we love God and want to obey His commands and follow His Word.

Starting with the Sixth Commandment in Exodus 20:13 *You shall not kill.*

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Second, we must defend life because our culture doesn't. Since the fall of man, when sin was introduced into the world through Adam and Eve, we have learned about death and its power to destroy life. Mankind's moral compass recognizes the taking of life as wrong, but we continually compromise our



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moral code because of the sin nature inherited at the fall. Every culture has embraced sins, passions and lifestyles that lead to death. Abortion, infanticide, exposure and abandonment of newborn babies became an accepted means of handling unwanted, deformed and illegitimate children throughout history. Pagan practices that were first described in the Old Testament include killing children and virgins as sacrifices to their gods and continue in many cultures around the world today. From the embryo to the elderly, a culture of death lurks behind more doors than the average person realizes. Physician-Assisted Suicide has been legalized in Oregon, the Netherlands and Denmark. Organizations such as Compassion in Dying are promoting euthanasia philosophies on the Internet, to hospital policy boards and legislators.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The third reason Christians and the Church must protect life is because our Christian heritage reflects a tradition of bearing witness to the sacredness of all life, both born and unborn, and it is incumbent upon us to uphold this legacy for future generations. In the book *Third Time Around*, author George Grant details the life-affirming teachings and ministries of Christians and the Church from the first century to present day. A brief synopsis of chapters two through six illuminates a rich Christian history that reinforces the importance of the Church honoring God by honoring His gift of life. It also encourages us by showing the success previous generations had in obeying God's call to defend the dignity of life.

Chapter two begins with the Apostles' disciples, the early Christian Church, affirming life in both word and deed. Documents like the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas promote a reverence for life. The Didache is a compilation of the apostolic moral teachings from the first century and it states: "There are two ways: the way of life and the way of death, and the difference between these two ways is great. Therefore, do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant." [pg.24] Tertullian, a third century apologist connected the Sanctity of life with the very integrity of the Gospel in his Apology: "Our faith declares life out of death. Therefore, murder is forbidden once and for all. We may not destroy even the fetus in the womb. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man killing. Thus it does not matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. In both instances, destruction

is murder." [pg.25] Grant also explains the ministry of the early Christian Church. In Rome, Christians rescued babies that had been abandoned on the exposure walls outside the city. They adopted the children and taught them the way of the Lord. The Christians in Corinth offered charity, mercy and refuge to temple prostitutes who had become pregnant. Grant states that wherever the Gospel went, believers expressed their faith in good works, including founding hospitals, establishing orphanages, and starting rescue missions and relief agencies. "The hungry were fed; the naked, clothed; the homeless, sheltered; the sick, nursed; the unborn, protected; and the handicapped, cherished." [pg.26]

In chapter three, Grant summarizes the life-affirming philosophy of the Middle Ages: "The medieval pro-life movement was first and foremost an outgrowth of the ministry of the church. It was a societal manifestation of God's work of covenantal reconciliation... Every effort on behalf of innocent life, from criminalization of abandonment to the care of the unwanted had its genesis in the sacramental Body of Christ. The medieval church, despite all our preconceived notions about its monolithic uniformity, was remarkably diverse. Yet in the substantive areas of the Gospel, it maintained steadfast unity: and because the pro-life movement was essentially a movement of the church, it too was marked by an unwavering solidarity." [pg. 46]

Chapter four of Grant's book Third Time Around highlights the work done by Vincent De Paul after he learned about midwives performing illegal abortions in the slums of Paris. In this quote he makes it clear that upholding the sanctity of life was not an optional activity for believers: "When're God's people gather, there is life in the midst of them. Christ's gift to us as a people is life and that more abundantly. To protect the least of these, our brethren, with everything that God has placed at our disposal is not merely facultative, it is exigent. In addition though, it is among the greatest and most satisfying of our sundry stewardships." [pg.53] The Society of Vincent De Paul still exists today living out the Gospel and serving others. Grant also refers to John Calvin and Ignatius Loyola as examples of men influencing the church to affirm and protect life during the Reformation.

The role of the great commission is the focus of chapter five. "As missionaries moved out from Christendom to the uttermost parts of the earth, they were shocked to discover all the horrors

of untamed heathenism. They found abortion all too prevalent, infanticide all too commonplace, abandonment all too familiar, and euthanasia all too customary.... To cultures epidemic with terrible poverty, brutality, lawlessness, and disease, those faithful Christian witnesses interjected the novel Christian concepts of grace, charity, law, medicine, and the Sanctity of life.... They established hospitals, they founded orphanages, they started rescue missions.... they changed laws. They demonstrated love. They lived as if people really mattered." [pgs.79 and 80]

The final chapter to note is six, where Grant focuses on the American effort in the late 1800s to protect life. After a series of articles began exposing the deaths of women from abortion, church leaders took up the cause for life, including the Right Reverend Arthur Cleveland Cox, Episcopal Bishop of the New York Diocese. In an interview for the August 4th, 1868 issue of The Christian Mirror, he stated "Though physicians and journalists have laid much of the groundwork for the exposure of this awful crime against God and man, it was the Christian churches, all of the churches across the broad spectrum of denomination and sect, that have brought hope and help to the innocents. For a glittering moment, I have seen Christ's Body as one." [pg.99] It was this unified effort among Christians, journalists, physicians, politicians and feminists that made abortion illegal in the United States by the end of the 18th century.

This review of the early church fathers' ministry for life must serve as example to us today. They have given us this rich heritage of respecting life, and they are our role models, inspiring us and showing us that with God's help we too can make a difference for life.

The fourth reason why believers should incorporate life-affirming activities into their devotional life is due to the gift of technology. Four-dimensional ultrasound technology machines provide a clear window into the womb of a pregnant woman. It allows us to see the unborn baby at various stages of development. These pictures are now published in books, the internet and seen in National Geographic television specials. We know the baby's heart begins beating at 28 days and all ten toes and ten fingers can be counted by week 12. We can now watch God knit each life together in his/her mother's womb.

The final reason why believers should actively affirm life is that the

consequences of killing another human life not only affect the murderer; they are also felt throughout society. As a woman who has had an abortion, I have personal experience with playing god; I've ended another person's life. Even though I know God has forgiven me after I repented, I often wonder who my baby would have grown up to be. The world missed out on being blessed by her and I lost the chance to know one of God's precious creations. Murder, abortion, and euthanasia not only end a life; these actions also impact the one who took the life. Furthermore, those related to the 'life-ender' also live with the truth that their loved one was capable of taking the life of another human being. Finally, the family of the one who died also experiences the impact of the death; pain, anger, sadness and grief are commonly felt.

These are five valid reasons for Christians and the Church to obey God's mandate to protect life. But are we as contemporary Christians and the Anglican/Episcopal Church upholding the sanctity of life per God's instructions?

PRESENT PERSPECTIVE

A day of research in the resolution archives of the Lambeth Conference and the Episcopal Church of the United States reveals an interesting story. The good news is that Lambeth has maintained a fairly consistent life ethic, the bad news is that the U.S. Episcopal Church has embraced the paganistic social mores that promote self as god.

Here is a quick run-down of our history: At the 1930 Lambeth Conference, two resolutions concerning life were passed. Resolution 15, accepted artificial contraception under certain circumstances and Resolution 16 stated "The Conference further records its abhorrence of the sinful practice of abortion."

In 1958, the Lambeth Conference authored the report "The Family in Contemporary Society." This report was published by The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1968 in the book *What the Bishops Have Said about Marriage*. On page 17, in discussing the status of the fetus it states that it "rejects the killing of life already conceived." Furthermore in 1958, the Lambeth Conference was misinformed about population rates increasing so fast as to threaten the young and old. It accepted the population control movement's propaganda and affirmed the need for family planning in Resolution 115.

This opened the door for the Episcopal Church in the United States to adopt a resolution entitled "Christian Marriage and Population Control" at the 1961 General Convention. In the third resolve of the resolution, it states "while condemning abortion and infanticide, we believe that methods of control which are medically endorsed and morally acceptable may help the people of these lands so to plan family life that children may be born without a likelihood of starvation and we approve the rendering by our Government of assistance to this end." The 1964 General Convention also condemned abortion in a resolution endorsing family planning.

In 1966, The Rt. Reverend Joseph Harte, Bishop of Arizona started Episcopalians for Life because he saw that the Episcopal Church was beginning to adopt the teachings of the progressive modernists' movement. His timing was right: at the next convention in 1967, a resolution was passed that permitted abortion when the health of the mother was in danger, the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest or when the child was thought to be 'deformed in mind or body.' In 1976, Resolution D095 expressed "its unequivocal opposition to any legislation on the part of the national or state governments which would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter and to act upon them." Later in 1988 and 1994, abortion resolutions were also passed reinforcing a woman's choice and opposition to any legislative limits on it for all nine months of a pregnancy. Ironically all the resolutions noted above acknowledge that life is sacred, and that it is a gift from God.

The Lambeth Conference went on in 1978 to pass Resolution 10 entitled "Human Relationships and Sexuality." Section 2 states: "The Conference commends to the Church... the need for programmes at diocesan level, involving both men and women, (a) to promote the study and foster the ideals of Christian marriage and family life, and to examine the ways in which those who are unmarried may discover the fullness which God intends for all his children; (b) to provide ministries of compassionate support to those suffering from brokenness within marriage and family relationships; (c) to emphasize the sacredness of all human life, the moral issues inherent in clinical abortion, and the possible implications of genetic engineering."

At the last Lambeth Conference in 1998, Resolution 1.14 states: "In light of the

current debate and proposals for the legalization of Euthanasia in several countries, this Conference: (a) affirms that life is God-given and has intrinsic sanctity, significance and worth; (b) defines euthanasia as the act by which one person intentionally causes or assists in causing the death of another who is terminally or seriously ill in order to end the other's pain and suffering; (c) resolves that euthanasia, as precisely defined, is neither compatible with the Christian faith nor should be permitted in civil legislation."

Finally, in November 2006, history was made when Archbishop Rowan Williams and Pope Benedict XVI signed a "Common Declaration" that specifically states: "There are many areas of witness and service in which we can stand together, and which indeed call for closer co-operation between us: the pursuit of peace in the Holy Land and in other parts of the world marred by conflict and the threat of terrorism; promoting respect for life from conception until natural death; protecting the sanctity of marriage and the well-being of children in the context of healthy family life; outreach to the poor, oppressed and the most vulnerable, especially those who are persecuted for their faith; addressing the negative effects of materialism; and care for creation and for our environment."

From this review of our church history, it is clear that the worldwide Anglican Church has maintained a closer position to the Biblical mandate to uphold the sanctity of life than the national U.S. Episcopal Church.

While our heritage in word is clearly stated above, our actions to protect life are harder to list. No website exists that allows us to research the Church's efforts to protect life, but the work of Episcopalians for Life, which was later incorporated as the National Organization of Episcopalians for Life and recently renamed Anglicans for Life has been documented. For 41 years this group has sought to put their love for the Lord of Life into ministry and outreach to pregnant woman, those hurt by abortion, the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. The hundreds of churches and chapters that partner with Anglicans for Life support pregnancy centers, offer help to single moms, and much more.

While reviewing our Church's position on life, it should be noted the U.S. Episcopal Church's Executive Council has chosen to affiliate with a group known as the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). This group wants to turn