



Uniting for Life

Fall, 2007

End of Life Consultation Service to Advocate Assisted Suicide

By Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life, secretary of NPRC

On September 18th United Church of Christ minister Kristi Denham announced that a new organization of clergy called the End of Life Consultation Service (ELCS) had been created that would be devoted to ministering to critically ill medical patients. Rev. Denham explained that this organization would "help terminal patients access hospice, pain treatment, and other excellent end of life care."

At first glance, the ELCS sounds like a charitable Christian group devoted to helping the sick and suffering, or another new ministry devoted to providing spiritual assurance to the gravely ill. Well, not exactly. You see, what makes this organization different from many others is that the ELCS's main purpose is to assist medical patients in planning their own deaths. And as one might expect in today's moral climate, one of the options for a patient's death offered by the ELCS includes committing suicide.

The new organization plans to man a 1-800 hotline which would provide potential callers with "volunteers [who would] visit patients and families in the home, and together they [could] identify a path to peaceful dying, well-suited to an individual's illness and circumstances." After the consultation the clients would then be free to "obtain and self-administer the means" of killing themselves.

Rev. Denham also noted that the creation of the ELCS was precipitated by the failure of the California Compassionate Choices Act (AB374), an act similar to Oregon's assisted suicide law, to pass through the California state legislature. This failure to legalize physician-assisted suicide was not attributed to many legislators' reluctance to open the door to medically-endorsed killing, but instead was simply chalked up by Rev. Denham to the legislature's "playing politics."

As disturbing as the creation of the ELCS is, with its effort to wrap physician-assisted suicide up in clerical attire, its methods are really nothing new. Indeed, one cannot fail to see the parallel between the creation of the ELCS and the effort forty years ago by activist clergymen and women to legalize abortion.

The pro-choice movement in the 1960's and 1970's was greatly assisted by many Christian denominations' support for the liberalization of existing abortion laws. The American Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church, the two denominations which became the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) all spoke out in support of legal abortion. Even the Southern Baptist Convention, which is today seen as one of the most pro-life denominations, originally approved of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, calling it an advance in the efforts for "religious liberty."

Much of this early Christian support for the legalization of abortion was

driven by an organization called the Clergy Consultation Service (CCS) (name sound familiar?) which was started by the Rev. Howard Moody, an American Baptist minister from New York. In 1967 this organization, which consisted of a group of twenty-one Protestant ministers and Jewish rabbis, began providing a referral service for women seeking illegal abortions. It seems that the ordained members of the CCS, much like the ELCS today, were deeply frustrated by the inability of state legislatures to change existing abortion laws, and so they took the law into their own hands. The CCS grew quickly, becoming active in twenty states before the Roe v. Wade decision. And if anyone thinks that the similarities between the ELCS and the CCS is just a coincidence, one only needs to refer back to Rev. Denham's statement in which she expresses her pride in being associated with "Rev. Moody, who has shown how clergy and caring advocates can change the law to meet current social needs through personal action."

Well we know how the story ended forty years ago: the public opinion was changed on the abortion question by the early 1970's and the US Supreme Court moved to legalize abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. While it said states may, if they wish, ban it in the third trimester, it excluded doing so when the abortion was for "health" reasons, defined so broadly as to encompass one's age or psychological distress.

Dr. Jean Garton, in her classic pro-life book, Who Broke the Baby, noted that the legalization of abortion opened the door to a dangerous and destructive "new ethic." She wrote,

"In the acceptance of abortion-on-demand, there occurs a subtle but profound shift in the attitude of society toward all people who are unwanted, imperfect, and dependent. The same forces involved in legalizing abortion, while claiming to alleviate the suffering of a woman with an unwanted pregnancy, are the same forces involved in the promotion of infanticide and euthanasia, claiming to want to eliminate the suffering of the handicapped, sick, and senile. When we choose to offer death as an alternative to suffering, the list of those who qualify under 'the new ethic' expands greatly."

On September 18th, the prognostications of Dr. Garton became a new and deeply sinful reality. The only question remains as to how our nation's churches will react to this new organization. Will they, as was done in the 1960's and 1970's, simply bury their heads in the sand, preferring to involve themselves instead in preparations for the upcoming advent tea? Or will they publicly denounce this new organization which elevates death as a virtue and attempts to legitimize suicide...?

[“An excerpt of this article was originally printed in FirstThings. com”]



Uniting for Life

A Christian Pro-Life Newsletter

Fall 2007



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

Photo Courtesy of LifeNews.com

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.

Anglicans for Life

Black Americans for Life

Common Good

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 (LCMS)

National Clergy Council (NCC)

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)

Anglicans for Life Asks Anglican Church to Stand Against Abortion

Anglicans for Life (AFL) are sponsoring a worldwide petition drive to ask the archbishops and bishops of the Anglican Communion to proclaim that the Anglican Church affirms the sacredness of every human life, including unborn children.

Georgette Forney, president of Anglicans for Life, says the Anglican Church has consistently made pro-life statements but has not established an official position.

The 2008 Lambeth Conference, a meeting of all the bishops and archbishops of the Anglican Communion held once a decade, will meet in June. The AFL petition is asking for an official statement during this Conference. The petition states that the Lambeth Conference resolutions which have been passed since 1930 show that the Anglican Communion continues to uphold the biblical view of the sanctity of life. However, Forney says the conference, while it expresses concern about abortion, has never officially declared itself to be pro-life.

"We need our Archbishops and Bishops to state unequivocally what the Anglican Communion believes regarding life, abortion and euthanasia, the AFL president asserted. "Anglicans for Life believes that it is time for the Anglican Communion to take a stand concerning the dignity of life," she added. She is hoping to see pro-life language be included in the Anglican Covenant the church is formulating.

AFL will be collecting signatures from both laity and ordained members of the church up through March 2008 and will present these to the bishops at the Lambeth Conference together with a proposed resolution to affirm the sanctity of life. The pro-life group is circulating the petition through its 75 chapters in the U.S., the U.K. and Africa, and also on its website www.AnglicansforLife.org. It hopes to collect as many as 100,000 signatures by the time of the conference.

[Anglicans for Life was formerly the National Organization of Episcopalians for Life (NOEL).]

National Memorial for the Preborn: Jan.22, 8:30 AM at the U.S. Capitol

The National memorial for the Pre-born and their Mothers and fathers is the only pro-life event held inside the US Capitol complex. Each year national pro-life leaders and clergy from numerous denominations take part in this prayerful remembrance of all victims of abortion and joyful celebration of God's gift of life.

This year's Memorial will be held on Tuesday, January 22, at 8:30 AM in the US Senate office buildings, exact room to be announced at the NPRC website. (Check the website before setting out to attend the service.) The program will end in plenty of time for you to get to the start of the annual March for Life.

Please tell your family, friends and fellow church members about this wonderful witness to the Sanctity of Life, held right in the midst of the United States Congress!

Abortion Likely to Negatively Affect a Couple's Relationship

How does abortion introduce stress into the relationship of the mother and father of the aborted child? Recently Dr. Priscilla Coleman, associate professor of human development and family studies at Bowling Green State University, published a review of research on this topic. Dr. Coleman comments that abortion is too often presented only from the point of view of the individual woman rather than as a relationship question.

"The identification of a pregnancy as "unintended" or "unwanted" is usually based on relationship factors with such pregnancies more common when relationships are just beginning, nearing an end, or are otherwise unstable.

"Decisions regarding resolution of unplanned pregnancies are likewise relational, involving the couple's connection to each other and each partner's relationship to the developing fetus. When pregnancy is terminated, the abortion becomes a part of the couple's shared history with potential to affect their future.

"Although relational aspects of abortion decision-making and adjustment may seem obvious, the experience of abortion is typically framed individually rather than relationally in the scientific literature. Compared to research focusing on the individual woman, few studies have adopted a relationship perspective on abortion decision making and adjustment. This has rendered the contemporary understanding of abortion one that is excised from social and interpersonal realities of people's lives."

Some of the factors involved in abortion decision-making by a couple are the degree of commitment in the relationship, desire to ever have children, confidence in mothering or fathering abilities, life-style and career intentions.

Post-abortion psychological effects can introduce negative emotions such as anger, guilt, grief, depression, or anxiety which may bring risk to the couple's relationship through behavior that is "ambivalent, withdrawn, antagonistic or aggressive."

Research has reported an increased risk for separation or divorce following an abortion. A few studies have also shown a connection between abortion and domestic violence, particularly during a subsequent pregnancy. Some research indicates an increased risk for sexual dysfunction for women who have had an abortion. One study revealed that decreased sexual desire was associated with not feeling worthy of one's partner. Based on studies done with couples who experience miscarriage or early death of a child, it is possible that also following an abortion sexual activity meant a reminder of the previous conception, fear of pregnancy and another possible loss, and viewing sexual pleasure as incompatible with mourning. Dr. Coleman suggests that, even though there is lack of study on this issue, it is logical to consider explanations that decline in sexual activity could be due to a perception of insensitivity or lack of support, the negative emotions following abortion, poor self-esteem, anger about unresolved relationship differences, and/or remaining grief and

trauma from the abortion.

Post-abortion studies have shown that feelings of guilt from an abortion become more pronounced with time. Many women whose abortion was in a distant past reported that they "felt as though they had been on an emotional roller coaster for decades and found themselves frequently thinking about their abortions and the children they never delivered." In the Coleman and Nelson study of 1998, "73% of college women and 64% of college men whose partner had a past abortion reported having thought about what their child would have been like."

It seems likely that if there were instability in a couple's relationship, such feelings would contribute to further difficulty.

The tragic reality of abortion is that it is irreversible. This finality about something that cannot be corrected, for which one cannot simply apologize, increases the guilt and shame which, if unresolved, may be expressed through self-punishing behavior, feeling that one does not deserve to be happy or worthy to receive love. There is also a well-established link between such emotional problems and substance abuse. Such realities increase the probability of relationship difficulties.

A problem for couples is that grieving over an abortion may be expressed very differently by the man than by the woman.

Men's tendency to be less expressive about their feelings can leave the woman feeling he is not bothered by the loss. A woman who needs to openly communicate about her suffering may be seen by the man as simply creating more pain for both of them. This can introduce great stress into their relationship.

Are couples that don't feel any guilt over their abortion any better off? If they don't have any negative feelings,

wouldn't this seem to indicate a callous spirit about life and children? Moreover, those that don't recognize the connection between an abortion and negative feelings they experience may blame their partner for their difficulties.

Dr. Coleman concludes: "The cloak of silence surrounding abortion has left couples, some of whom may very well be at an increased risk for experiencing relationship difficulties, struggling alone to understand and respond to relationship challenges in the aftermath of abortion. An essential first step toward change is open acknowledgment of the dark potential of abortion to disrupt individuals' lives and wreak havoc on intimate bonds. Like an insidious cancer, the destructive nature of abortion often lives on in the hearts of men and women long after the life of their [child] has ended."



Photo courtesy of LifeNews.com

"Tragically, a person will abort with the hope of salvaging their relationship, but the toxic aftereffects of abortion are like a radioactive seed planted in the heart of the relationship that will, at varying speeds, kill the relationship."

Kevin Burke, associate director of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries and pastoral associate at Priests for Life.

For the details of this study, see the *Association for Interdisciplinary Research in Values and Social Change Research Bulletin*, Winter 2007, "The Decline of Partner Relationships in the Aftermath of Abortion," by Priscilla K. Coleman, Ph.D.



"Where do the presidential candidates stand on life issues?"

For an unbiased, nonpartisan comparison of views based on the voting records and public statements of each candidate go to www.nrlc.org and click on **Presidential Comparison Flyer."**

Crisis Pregnancy Center Conferences Offer Training

By Cindy Evans, United Methodist Church

[Following are excerpts adapted from an article in *LifeWatch*.]

Care Net and Heartbeat International, Inc. hold large, annual conferences where CPC/PRC staff and volunteers learn ways to improve their ministries to all who enter their centers...

Beyond the worship services and keynote speakers...ten tracks of workshops cover topics important to the pro-life community. ...Tracks such as the "Medical" and "Housing" tracks, and the "Post-Abortion" track are highly relevant for pro-life training...

Eighty-five different workshops, each lasting 1-1/4 hours, were offered during the Heartbeat International Conference last April... I attended seven of the nine post-abortion workshops offered. As I listened, it became clear that abortion impacts many people beyond the pregnant woman and the child she aborts. I was reminded that the decision to abort not only impacts the woman and child but also may impact the boyfriend, future husband and families, grandparents, siblings, friends, and even employers. One abortion, multiplied millions of times, has a major influence on the health and well-being of our culture...

"How to Use the Media to Turn Words into Actions"—proved to be invaluable as well... knowing what to expect from, and how to respond to, reporters is essential for any pro-life ministry....

By the end of the three-day conference in April, I was filled to overflowing with new information, new friendships, and new enthusiasm for spreading the truth about abortion, about its after-effects, and about the message of life. ...

So, what can you do? If you are able, attend this conference! The 37th Annual Heartbeat International Conference will be held April 16-19, 2008 in Dallas, TX. The CareNet Conference is held in September.

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
 \$_____ to help NPRC with its important work.

**Mail to: NPRC c/o Development Office,
 PO Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306-9811**

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