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 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-abortion 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 counseling.

Another question often raised, “What if a pastor sees pro-life as fanatical or ‘single issue’?” was addressed by Rev. Kirk van der Sweagh 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 abortion. 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, “How can post-abortion 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-abortion 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, and immediately understanding that the abortion epidemic is a civil rights or a moral issue, but avoiding politics.

Some have found pastors who say, “ Abortions don’t happen in my church. People know it’s wrong.” Marie Bowen of Presbyterian 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 crisis pregnancy center, 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.” he concluded.

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 inviolability 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.

“Whatever I am doing is what a shepherd should be doing: calling the Bock to respect the law written in our human hearts...to protect human life.” the Archbishop responded.

How Can We Help Christian Pastors Strengthen Pro-Life Ministry? NPRC Workshop Provides Experienced Wisdom

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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.

“As 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-life “not prudent in the manner of presentation, can actually drive people away from the truth.”

“Courage like the Lion’s must also be 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 out love with 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 of the Declaration of Independence that still stand as a unique promise 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 “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 troubling 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.

“Americans truly want to respect for human life today then we need to demand from our leaders and from ourselves nothing less than the tearing down of the wall of injustice and oppression created by Roe v. Wade,” the Archbishop stated.

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 Tribeca 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 no your-run-of-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 convention. 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 she says she is waiting until she is married and having herself for true love. There is no way this had appeared on Sparks’ personal Myspace page with her holding a sign with National Right to Life saying Stop Abortion Now.

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 one little one? The Northminster Presbytery of the 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 Northminster 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 abortions at any time during the pregnancy. Even if the pastor is a practicing Catholic. The Vatican’s point of view is that the RU-486 abortion pill for reasons like unwanted pregnancies, gender selection, and selective reduction. The portion of our tithe and offerings included in the Pastor’s terms of call is used to pay due 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 concerns who choose having the the choices 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 help offset the uninsured costs of adoption, 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 Presbyterians 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… 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!

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 groups....

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 pro-abortion Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). The latter set of resolutions noted such concerns as RCRC’s ‘untraditional’ 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 1975 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.

“Roe v. Wade, 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 social 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 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.